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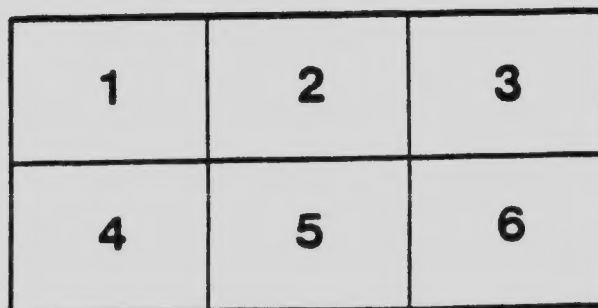
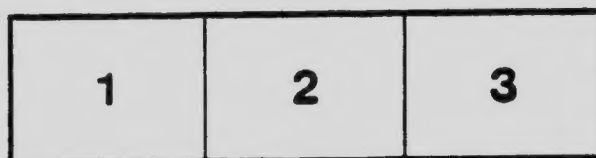
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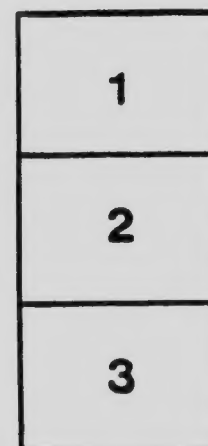
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—The—
EVOLUTION
of the PRAIRIE
PROVINCES

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W. S. HERRINGTON

Arthur J. Howell

La Rochelle

June 1918

The Evolution of the Prairie Provinces

The Evolution of the Prairie Provinces

BY

W. S. HERRINGTON, K.C.

Author of "Heroines of Canadian History"
and "Martyrs of New France."



Toronto
William Briggs
1911

FC 3237

H4

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Great God ! We thank Thee for this home—
This bounteous birthland of the free,
Where wanderers from afar may come,
And breathe the air of liberty.

—*William Jewett Pabodie.*

PREFACE.

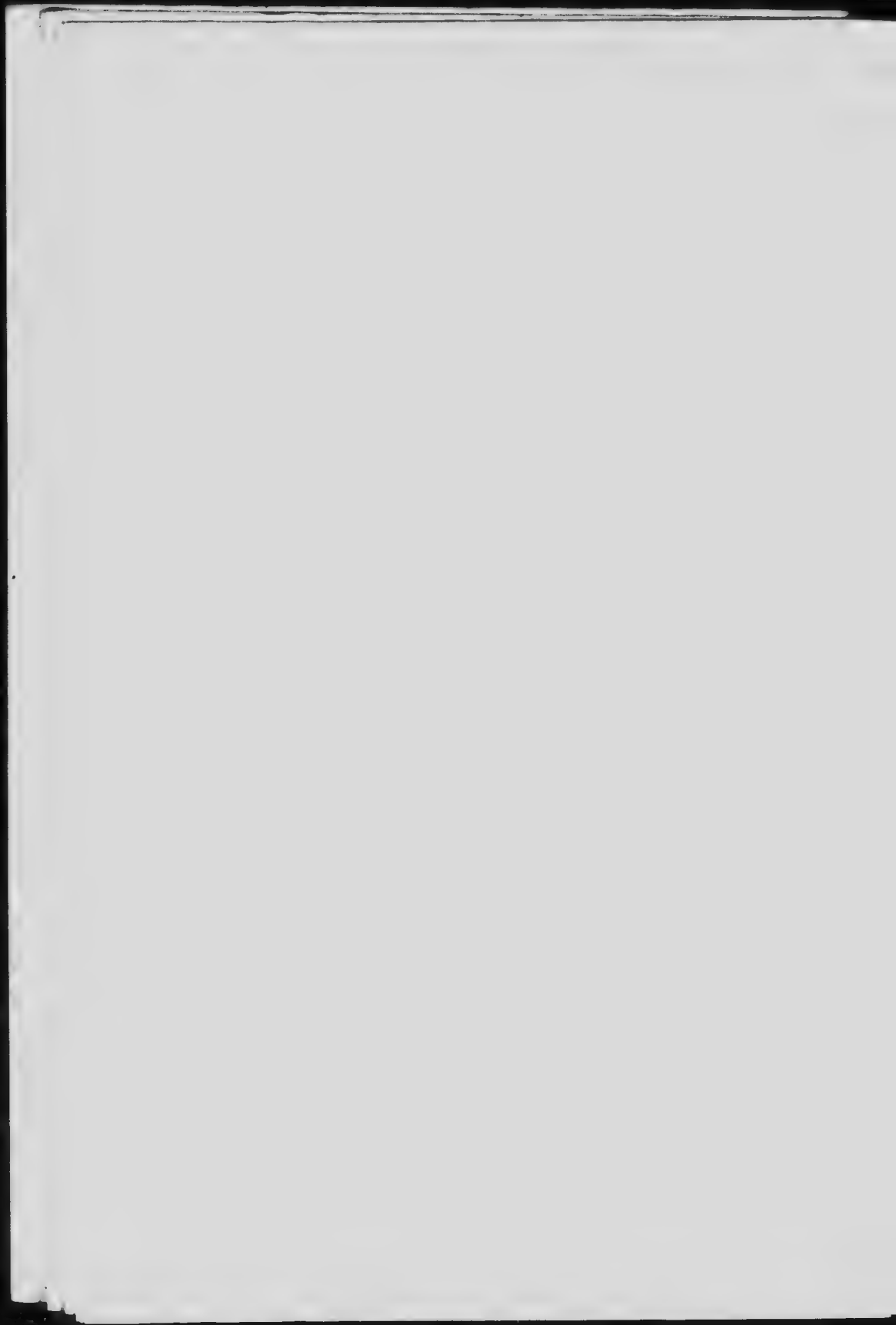
WE are just beginning to realize that the time is not far distant when Great Britain must depend to a large extent for her food supply upon our Prairie Provinces. Two hundred years ago no white man dwelt between the head of Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains. Less than one hundred years ago the first settlers upon the Red River were forced to tramp five hundred miles to obtain seed grain to plant for their personal use, and the Governor of the little colony found it necessary to prohibit the export of foodstuffs of any description. To-day millions of bushels of grain are bought and sold in a few hours upon the Grain Exchange of Winnipeg, and "Manitoba wheat" is the standard of quality the world over. It is the purpose of the following chapters to trace briefly the discovery and development of this vast territory. That there are many gaps to be filled and that many interesting incidents and important events have been omitted I am well aware. Preparations are already on foot for the centennial celebration of the first settlement in Rupert's Land, and the time is most opportune for becoming better acquainted with our Western neighbors. While I do not pretend to lay before the reader any new historical facts or to advance

any views that have not been more ably presented by other writers, yet I do hope to so direct his attention to this important part of our national history that he may be disposed to pursue his enquiries by the study of more pretentious works upon the subject.

W. S. HERRINGTON.

Napanea, August 1st, 1911.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRAIRIE
PROVINCES



THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES

CHAPTER I.

TO-DAY the natural wealth of Canada is measured by its wheat-fields, its forests, its mines and its fisheries. Three hundred years ago the countless leagues of virgin soil awaited but the ploughman's magic touch to answer with a golden harvest; the woodman's axe had not yet disturbed the silent haunts of the wild denizens that stalked fearlessly through the avenues of stalwart pines; the hidden treasures of the earth had escaped the eager quest of the lonely prospector, and the seas and inland waters still teemed with millions of the choicest fish. Some of the best blood of France left their homes of comfort and luxury to risk the perils of an ocean voyage and to brave the adventures of savage life in America, but not to enrich themselves from any of these sources of untold wealth that now attract the thousands of emigrants to our shores. It is true that an occasional dreamer, as he was then believed to be, foreshadowed the time when New France would be a prosperous colony, but the wildest imagination never pictured the wonderful potentialities of this part of the new world.

The industrious little animal that figures so conspicuously on the Canadian coat-of-arms was the lode-

star that attracted so many adventurous spirits to the wilds of Canada. Europe wanted the beaver skins and the Indians coveted the firearms, kettles, hatchets and trinkets of the white man, so a regular trade in these commodities was established, which for two centuries controlled the destiny of half a continent. If beaver skins were plentiful the colony flourished and vast fortunes were accumulated; if scarce, as frequently happened, the inhabitants were brought to the verge of bankruptcy. The great fur trading centres on the St. Lawrence were Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec. Hither came the Indians with their flotillas of canoes laden with the precious peltries to exchange for the merchandise of the traders. By far the greater number came from the Upper Lakes and the territory beyond, and many a tragedy was enacted on the Ottawa River, which was the main route for this enormous traffic. It was no uncommon occurrence for the Iroquois to lie in ambush at some portage and fall upon and massacre the western hunters as they neared the end of their long journey and carry the booty away to the Dutch and English traders on the Hudson, thus at one stroke crippling both the red and white men north of the St. Lawrence and furnishing themselves with the sinews of war to repeat the raid the following year.

The Iroquois confederation, also known as the Five Nations, composed of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas, occupied that portion of the central part of the State of New York lying between the Hudson River and the Genesee. They were by far the most intelligent, as well as the most warlike, savages on the continent, and no white man or Indian north of

the Great Lakes or along the St. Lawrence was exempt from their fierce and sudden attacks. This was one of the recognized risks incurred by everyone embarking in the trade, yet few, if any, were deterred thereby. Although life in the New World was filled with hardships, privations and dangers, it had a fascination for the daring young Frenchman. The solitude of the forest seemed to breathe forth a sympathy that touched his heart; the broad expanse of the lakes was symbolic of that life he led free from the narrow restraints of the civilized world; the roaring cataracts stirred him to action as they rushed heedlessly on to the deeper waters beyond. Nature sang to him in divers tones, and every note awakened within his breast a chord attuned to her sweet melody:

“ Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky and glowing clime extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For nature's pages glaz'd by sunbeams on the lake.”

The early trader and explorer cherished the wilderness life for the very dangers he encountered and overcame. Above all these allurements there was the mystery of the Great West challenging the white man to wrest from it the story of its secrets.

Up to the time we are about to deal with, no one had penetrated beyond Lake Superior. What tribes of Indians inhabited those regions? What avenues of trade

might yet be opened up? What lakes and rivers still remained undiscovered? Where was the Great Sea of Japan and how was it to be reached?

Between 1576 and 1579 Sir Martin Frobisher, in search of a passage to China and Cathay, made three voyages, but accomplished little more than to discover the strait named after himself. Captain John Davis crossed the Arctic Circle in 1585, passed through Davis Strait to an open sea beyond, but, owing to the rough weather and the lateness of the season, was unable to continue his discoveries. To the celebrated English navigator, Captain Henry Hudson, is due the credit of discovering the river, strait and bay that bear his name. The voyages yielding such important results were undertaken in 1607 and the following years, during the same period that the French were seeking on the Atlantic seaboard and the St. Lawrence River a suitable location for a colony of their countrymen. Exposed in an open boat, with a scanty supply of provisions, he was cast adrift by his mutinous crew to perish at sea in the waters he was the first to navigate, or, perchance, to be cast ashore to meet a worse fate at the hands of the hostile savages. Following the lead of Hudson, the old searovers, Sir Thomas Button, William Baffin, Captain James and Captain Luke Fox, all sought in vain for the Western passage. They each added their little portion to the geographical data of the Arctic regions and left their names upon the most important of their discoveries. Fox reached Port Nelson in 1631 and spent several weeks in exploring the adjacent country, but his mind was so bent upon discovering the Western passage that he did not foresee the future possibilities of the trade

of that important post. For nearly forty years thereafter the English appear to have lost all interest in Hudson Bay and to have made no serious attempt to open up a trade or continue their explorations in that direction. In the meantime rumors of the Northern and Western tribes who visited its shores had reached New France, and the Canadian merchants were eager enough to secure their trade. Could this sea be reached by an overland route and the trade attracted to the ports upon the St. Lawrence? How much longer would this problem remain unsolved? Entirely apart from the commercial aspect, here was a tempting field indeed for the ambitious explorer. We to-day who have comparatively easy access to every habitable portion of the globe can hardly appreciate the allurements of discovery of two hundred and fifty years ago. The successful discoverer was not infrequently accorded a greater triumph than the scarred veterans of a hundred fights.

Eager for the contest, many a spirited youth entered the lists, and among the number was Pierre Esprit Radisson, a young man who was destined to become the leading spirit in the formation of a gigantic trading corporation whose history is inseparably linked with the growth and development of Canada. As he has not generally been ascribed that place in history which his remarkable discoveries and achievements demand, we plead no excuse for devoting some space to a brief summary of his early life in Canada. He was born at St. Malo about the year 1635, and emigrated to Three Rivers with his parents in 1651. In the following year, while out hunting with two companions, not far from the fort, he was captured by a band of Iroquois. Both

of his companions were massacred, and he would have met a similar fate but for his bravery in turning, single-handed, and firing upon two score or more of his pursuers. This fearless act upon his part won for him the respect of the Indians into whose hands he had fallen and doubtless was the cause of their sparing his life at the time, while the mangled bodies of his less courageous comrades were left scalpsless in the forest, a prey to the wolves. He was taken to the Iroquois villages, and from the time of his capture he so ingratiated himself with the savages that he was permitted to pass unscathed through the terrible ordeal of "running the gauntlet," and when the chiefs sat in council to determine his fate his good fortune still followed him. The wife of a powerful chief whose son had been slain in the wars interrupted the grave deliberations by begging that Radisson be given to her to replace the son she had lost. This was not an uncommon practice among all Indian tribes, and, her petition being granted, he was adopted into the family of the bereaved chief. This event was celebrated by a feast at which all the young Mohawk warriors welcomed Radisson as a brother. From that time he seems to have been thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his surroundings, and zealously applied himself to the study of the Indian character, the mysteries of woodcraft, and the art of hunting. He became so proficient that after the lapse of a few weeks he was invited to accompany three young braves upon a hunting expedition. While upon this trip they were joined by a captive Algonquin, who as they lay one night about the camp-fire disclosed to Radisson a means of escape, which was to murder their three companions sleeping by their side. Efforts have been made

to defend this bloody act, but, taking the facts in their most favorable light, they cannot efface the stain upon the memory of our young hero. Two of the sleeping Mohawks were brained by the Algonquin while Radisson despatched the third, and the two captives were free. Free! but it was freedom at an awful price! His life had not been in danger, he had been well treated by his captors, and could have awaited a more favorable opportunity to effect his escape. The excuses that are pleaded for this cold-blooded murder are his youth, the recollection of the murder of his two companions, the suddenness of the proposal, and the horrible tales of recent massacres of the French poured into his ear by the Algonquin. These may be urged by his biographers as reasons for the crime, but they cannot be accepted as a justification. With three fresh scalps dangling from the waist of the Algonquin the two remaining hunters, now transformed into the hunted, concealed the bodies of their victims in the river and set out for the St. Lawrence. Hiding in the thicket by day and travelling by night, they cunningly avoided the frequented trails, and after a tiresome journey of two weeks reached Lake St. Peter, almost within sight of home and friends. Here again Radisson, against his own better judgment, yielded to the solicitations of his companion, and they attempted to cross the lake by daylight. When well out upon its surface a party of ambushed Iroquois gave chase, with the result that the Algonquin was shot dead and Radisson once more found himself a prisoner, with little hope of mercy this time, as three scalps floating upon the water where his comrade had sunk disclosed him as an accomplice at least in the murder of the three Mohawk hunters.

As his captors mustered for the return trip to their country they numbered about one hundred and fifty, and he was not the only prisoner. Once more he turned his back upon his father's home and set out with the other prisoners and their escort for the land of the Iroquois. As they neared the Mohawk villages they were yoked together, one behind the other, with their heads between two saplings bound to their shoulders, and in this defenceless position were marched between two lines of tormentors who vied with each other in inflicting upon their victims every conceivable form of torture. Radisson was singled out for special attention, and was beaten, bruised, mutilated, and burned. He saw his fellow prisoners in turn disposed of: some summarily executed before his eyes and others sentenced to slavery. His case being a desperate one he was the prisoner of distinction and his trial was reserved for the last. Again his adopted parents came to his rescue with presents of precious wampum, and pleaded eloquently for his life. For some time it hung in the balance, but the oratory of the old chief prevailed, and Radisson again was saved to begin anew the savage life.

It was weeks before he was sufficiently recovered from his wounds to resume his ordinary pursuits of accompanying the young braves in the chase and upon the war-path. Those were his schooldays, qualifying him for his career as an explorer. He was permitted to join a band upon a visit to Fort Orange, on the Hudson (the site of the present city of Albany), where for the first time for two years he had a faint glimpse of civilization, and was offered the means of escape; but he had pledged his word to his Indian mother that he would return, and he

accordingly declined the offer of his Dutch friends and came back with the expedition. This one short taste of his former life had awakened a longing to rejoin his parents on the St. Lawrence, and two weeks after his return he stole away from the village, and, wandering alone through the forest, he again reached Fort Orange, and through the assistance of friends he sailed to New York, thence to Europe, and back again to Three Rivers. He reached his home in May, 1654, and we can readily conceive the joy of his parents, who long before had abandoned all hope of ever seeing him again. He learned, to his surprise, that apparently friendly communications had been renewed between the French and the warlike confederacy across the border. After a grand display of oratory on the part of the Indians, and the presentation of wampum belts each signifying some token of good will towards the French, a treaty of peace had been patched up by the Iroquois during his absence. Such events may safely be regarded with suspicion, for the Indians were the last to sue for peace unless hopelessly vanquished or some material advantage to them was in sight, and the French were slow to discern the underlying motives of the peaceful overtures of their wily enemies.

Their next move was to ask for a French settlement among them, ostensibly for the purpose of obtaining instruction in Christianity, but the real object was to have the white men in their midst as a guarantee that they would not be interrupted in their raids against the tribes across the lakes. Accordingly, a colony from the St. Lawrence was established among the Onondagas, and in 1657 the crafty Iroquois invited a band of Christian

Hurons, a small remnant of that almost extinct tribe, to take up their residence among them. The unsuspecting French rejoiced at the fair prospect of the conversion of the Five Nations. Two Jesuit priests and twenty young Frenchmen accompanied the refugees, and Radisson joined the party as interpreter. The route selected was by way of the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario, thence across to Oswego River, and up the river towards the Onondaga villages. They had not proceeded far before it became apparent that the Iroquois were plotting some treachery, which was nothing less than the murder of the Christian Hurons, if not indeed the entire party. Upon this fatal voyage was committed one of the blackest crimes in the history of these ferocious savages. Reaching an island in the St. Lawrence, probably one of the Thousand Islands, an Onondaga chief drove his tomahawk through the skull of a Huron woman who had rejected his advances, and with this the general butchery of the Hurons began. Paul Ragueneau, one of the missionaries of the party, to whose intrepidity the French owe their escape from a like fate, writes:—"My eyes were compelled to gaze on that spectacle of horror, and my heart was pierced with agony as I saw them murdered before the eyes of their wives and children. Some were stabbed or tomahawked in my very arms and on my breast as I tried to shield them." Only one Huron brave escaped this merciless slaughter at the hands of their faithless guides.

When Radisson and his party joined the French settlement at Onondaga they took counsel together to devise some means of escape, for there was no longer any doubt that their treacherous neighbors were planning their

destruction. The French were housed in a well-constructed fort which secured for them a certain degree of privacy. Fortunately, also, the Governor at Quebec had at the first sign of trouble arrested twelve young Iroquois warriors whom he still held as hostages. Early in September thirteen of the French eluded the spies of the enemy and escaped to Quebec with messages from their brethren at Onondaga, but the despatches sent in reply never reached their destination. As the season advanced, with no prospect of succor from that source, they realized that their fate lay in their own hands. The Iroquois blood was up and nothing but the twelve hostages at Quebec saved the inmates of the fort. Like hungry wolves the fierce warriors, encamped about the gates, awaited a signal to begin the massacre. All winter long the French remained within the enclosure, but were by no means idle. Day after day, in an unfrequented attic, the carpenters plied hammer, chisel, and saw in the construction of two large flat-bottomed boats. Among the increasing host encircling the fort was Radisson's foster-father, who made known to him the plans of the besiegers. Spring was soon upon them, and the lakes and rivers were breaking up, and the flat-bottomed boats nearing completion could be brought into requisition; but the great problem was how to evade the vigilance of the enemy. But Radisson had not studied the Indian character in vain. Owing to his connection with his Indian father he could move with freedom among their wigwams, and when the hour was ripe he industriously circulated the report that there had been revealed to him in a dream a vision of a grand feast given by the French in honor of the Iroquois. His knowledge of their

superstitious belief in dreams here manifested itself to good advantage. The dream was the excuse for the feast, and the feast was to afford the means of escape from their gluttonous enemies. Preparations were begun, the invitations sent forth, and from all quarters flocked the hungry and expectant Indians. To whet their appetites the guests were kept in waiting for two days, being meanwhile entertained with games and pastimes that delighted their savage natures. Every detail was well timed, and as darkness settled over the fort a huge bonfire was lighted as a signal that the greatest feast in the history of Onondaga was ready to be served. The outer gates were thrown open, and in rushed the famished hordes, shouting and gesticulating with unfeigned joy as they scented the steaming kettles of savory stews. In one respect they were not doomed to disappointment. With a profligacy warranted only by the purpose to be served, the French, after providing for their own trip, and reserving a pig, some dogs, and chickens to maintain a show of life about the fort, had consigned to the kettles every scrap of food they possessed. The guests were seated about the fire, the kettles brought in, and the gorging began. Never were performed such feats in eating. Given under ordinary circumstances a ravenous Indian and plenty of food, the conditions are favorable for a gastronomic exhibition; but such a feast was to them a sacred offering from the Great Spirit, and to decline any proffered food was nothing short of a deadly sin. Moreover, in this instance the dishes were particularly to their liking, and the competition with their neighbors at their elbows spurred them on to greater activity. They danced, and shouted, and sang the praises of their generous hosts — who meanwhile launched their

boats under cover of the darkness and uproar. As the contest proceeded and they emptied the oft-replenished kettles they rolled about the ground, no longer able to rise to their feet. Still the delicacies were passed round, and the savages, desirous of availing themselves to the uttermost of so grand an opportunity, gravely endeavored to swallow just one more portion, until, overcome by their own gluttony, they lay about the courtyard, oblivious to all sensations save that of a full stomach. It has been suggested that Radisson had seasoned the food with some powerful opiate; but who will censure him if he did? It was now midnight. The chickens and dogs were left to cackle and bark, and the warder's rope was tied to the leg of the pig, the only sentry left on guard, as the Frenchmen manned their boats and turned their prows towards Lake Ontario. It was several hours before the Indians revived from their stupor, and as they tugged at the belfry rope to give the signal for admission to the fort the pig played the part assigned to him by imitating the tramp of the supposed watchman. And thus a full week had passed, and the Frenchmen were safely beyond the reach of their late guests, before it dawned upon them that they had been outwitted by the cunning of their foster-brother. With the single exception of one mishap on the St. Lawrence, through which three of their number were drowned, the party arrived safely in Quebec on the 3rd day of April, 1658. We may fairly ascribe the honor of rescuing the settlement from a cruel and certain massacre to Radisson and Father Ragueneau. The one craftily allayed the suspicions of their would-be murderers while the other inspired his countrymen with courage during the preparations for their escape.

CHAPTER II.

SUCH was the schooling of the man whose life-work was fraught with problems of momentous interest to us. Up to this time the Jesuit missionaries had reached Sault Ste. Marie, at the entrance to Lake Superior, and Green Bay, on the western shore of Lake Michigan; but the territory west of these points was as yet unknown. Speculations were rife as to what lay beyond, and the maps of that period were framed upon the vague and unreliable reports of the Indians. The English had ploughed through floes of ice to Hudson Bay, the Spaniards had coasted about the Gulf of Mexico and had sailed up the Pacific coast, but had gained no clear conception of its complete outline. Here then, wrapped in mystery, lay the greater part of a continent known to yield great stores of furs. Who was to discover its lakes and rivers, attract the trade of the wandering tribes traversing its boundless plains, and plant the standard of his country upon its fertile soil and thereby establish a title to what was in time to become the mainstay of the Western Hemisphere?

Shortly after his escape from Onondaga, Radisson learned from his brother-in-law, Médard Chouart Groseillers, the reports that had reached Quebec of the then unknown Great Northwest. He could not remain idle, and it was not long before he and his fur-trading brother-in-law had formulated their plans for an expedition

which they believed would bring them both wealth and fame. A party of Algonquins were returning to the Upper Lakes from their annual visit to the St. Lawrence, and were joined by thirty-four Frenchmen, all fired with a zeal to penetrate the unknown lands in the far west, and among the number were two missionaries and Radisson and Groseillers. They had not gone far upon their voyage before they were beset by plundering bands of Iroquois, and it was not long before all the white men but two had turned back towards Montreal. These two were the fur-trader Groseillers and his undaunted brother-in-law. The Indians continued to harass them upon the trip, but they eventually reached Green Bay, from which the Frenchmen led a number of young warriors against the raiders, and succeeded in overtaking and exterminating them. From that time the Algonquins lavished upon them all the honors they could devise and cheerfully rendered them all the assistance in their power to prosecute their voyage farther west over territory yet untrodden by any white man. Guided by their Algonquin friends, they set out towards the setting sun, across the State of Wisconsin, and found themselves among the Mascoutins, a numerous tribe dwelling on the banks of a mighty stream believed by many to be one of the upper forks of the Father of Waters. It has been urged that they were the real discoverers of the Mississippi, and that to ascribe this honor to Joliet, Marquette, and La Salle is to rob the brothers-in-law of the glory of their achievement. While it is quite probable that they did cross one of the upper branches, yet they in no way associated the stream they crossed with the great waterway emptying into the Gulf of Mexico, and the term

"discovery" implies more than was accomplished by them. Thus in the spring of 1659, a century before the world dreamed of the possibilities of the Great West, these two young Frenchmen gazed in wonder upon the expanding sea of green bounded only by the horizon. Here their Algonquin guides left them, and the Mascoutins, or "People of the Fire," conducted them farther west, where they heard of the great prairie tribes, the Sioux, the Assiniboinés, and the Crees. With few landmarks recognizable to-day, it is difficult to trace the exact course of their journey, but so far as can be gathered from the records they wandered as far west as Minnesota and returned by a northwesterly route along the north shore of Lake Superior to Sault Ste. Marie. Groseillers' health had suffered from the trials and exposure of their long expedition, and winter was again drawing near, so, shifting their camp north of the regular trail, to escape an attack from the Iroquois, who were reported to be wandering through the neighboring forests, the restless Radisson, at the head of one hundred and fifty Crees, resumed his explorations, but this time started in a northwesterly direction. Behold this solitary traveller plodding day by day, all winter long, through the dense forest, blazing a trail for future generations. Farther on, as he emerged upon the prairies, still forging ahead through the deep snow, buried at night in heavy drifts, we wonder if his slumbers were disturbed by visions of the countless homeseekers who centuries after were to follow in his footsteps.

In the spring he returned to Green Bay, where Groseillers met him, as had been previously arranged between them. The trading partner had not meanwhile

been idle, but had gathered about him hundreds of hunters with their furs, and the two explorers, who had now been absent nearly two years, set out for Quebec accompanied by a mixed escort of five hundred Indians, composed of Salteaux, Sioux, Hurons, and Algonquins, with their canoes laden to the gunwales with bales of choicest furs. Their return trip was uneventful until they reached the Long Sault, where they were stubbornly opposed by a number of ambushed Iroquois, who were speedily dispersed by the cunning tactics of Radisson. Here too they found traces of a recent conflict that had taken place but a few weeks before between the brave Adam Daulac and a handful of Frenchmen on one hand and overwhelming numbers of Iroquois on the other.

A warm welcome was extended to the travellers at Quebec, for the furs they brought with them saved the colony from bankruptcy and the news of their discoveries gave them a standing among the leading explorers of the day.

Not content with the successes already achieved, they no sooner joined their families at Three Rivers than they began planning the extension of their conquests; and this time they aimed at the discovery of an overland route to the Great Sea of the North, whence came reports of famous hunting grounds with rich harvests of furs. Hudson Bay was the next goal to be reached, and who can say that Radisson did not already conceive the plan of establishing communications between that sea and the Great Northwest he had discovered, thereby foreshadowing the plan of utilizing that route as an outlet for the commerce of the great prairie district? His subsequent

movements all point to the belief that that was the object he had in view. Others, probably moved thereto by rumors of his intention, set about laying their plans for a similar expedition; but they contemplated ascending the Saguenay, and thence northward to the bay. Radisson was invited to join this expedition, framed under the patronage of the Governor; but he declined the invitation, and hastily set in motion his own preconceived idea, which was to establish a base somewhere at the very threshold of the Great West. Application for a license to embark upon such a voyage, which, if successful, meant so much for the colony, was made to M. d'Avaugour, the Governor, who expressed himself as pleased to grant the license, but coupled with it the impossible condition that one-half the profits should be given to him. Radisson was determined to go in any event, and if the Governor did not see fit to grant the license he would go without it, trusting that the outcome would in the end gain for him an endorsement of his action. Thus at the beginning of his career — for he was but twenty-five years of age — he began the life-long struggle of operating at cross-purposes with the powers that be. That was probably not solely due to the avarice of the Governor, but in part to the lack of diplomacy upon the part of the young adventurer, as he seemed for the rest of his life to find all his plans miscarry at some stage through his failure either to secure or retain the confidence of the governing bodies with which he endeavored to co-operate. This lack of support renders his wonderful achievements all the more praiseworthy. Many a young man in like circumstances would have retired disheartened from the field, but his purpose

was whetted by the opposition he met. Eluding the watchful eye of the Governor, he, Groseillers, and another young Frenchman named Larivière left Three Rivers one August midnight in 1661 and joined upon Lake St. Peter a band of Indians returning to the Upper Lakes. In an effort to evade the pursuit of a hostile party of Iroquois, Larivière became separated from the rest and found his way back to Three Rivers, and again our two heroes are the only white men of the party. Steadily advancing over rough portages, fighting roving bands of Iroquois, westward still they went along the winding rivers, pestered by mosquitoes and black flies; across the stormy lakes, buffeted about by the autumn gales, this time following the south shore of Lake Superior, the first white men to accomplish this feat, until at length they reached its western extremity just as winter was setting in. It was their intention to visit the tribes of what is now the Province of Manitoba, but transportation at this season was difficult; so, after proceeding a short distance inland along the present international boundary, they dismissed their Cree guides, who were anxious to reach their homes, and built for themselves a small fort, the first trading-post west of the Great Lakes. Here they remained, a source of wonder to the neighboring tribes, hunting and trading until the following autumn, when the Crees returned, four hundred strong, and, rejoicing in the privilege, proudly bore upon willing shoulders the supplies of the white men through the forest to their own lodges, where their families, numbering over one thousand souls, received the strangers with an acclamation little short of idolatry. It was well for the Frenchmen that these prairie tribes did not share

the superstition of their eastern brethren, who were wont to attribute all their calamities to the presence of the white men among them: for no sooner were the festivities given in their honor concluded than winter set in, bringing with it a famine which the red and white men were powerless to relieve and from which five hundred of the tribe perished.

Intelligence of the white men among the Crees reached the neighboring Sioux, who sent messengers in the spring to invite them to visit their country. After the usual Indian ceremony concluding with a feast — for the famine had been relieved by the advent of spring — Radisson consented to return with them, but not until he had effected a treaty of peace between the two nations. To the land of the Sioux the two travellers accordingly went, and spent several weeks in hunting upon the plains. Having cemented the good will of this powerful and warlike tribe, and secured a great quantity of furs, they circled towards the north, thence easterly to their little pioneer fort. It is impossible to determine with certainty their exact route, but it is not improbable that they traversed considerable portions of the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as the neighboring States: but the greatest task yet remained to be performed, and that was the discovery of the route to Hudson Bay. It was the custom of the Crees to migrate to the north every spring, and thither their guests desired to accompany them. Radisson was suffering severely from an accident in which he nearly lost his life, but this did not prevent him from setting out. For the first few days he lagged behind, silently enduring the racking pains of his recent injuries, but, rejoining

the main body, they continued northward down a river, through jams of ice, to a great salt sea. The brief description given by himself of this trip seems to leave little doubt that he reached the shores of Hudson Bay. This conclusion is doubted by some historians, while others, more competent perhaps to express an opinion, confidently assert that Radisson and Groseillers were the first white men to discover the overland route to the Great Sea of the North. Their achievements so far outshone the work of all their contemporaries that, even shorn of the glory of this final triumph, they had earned for themselves the honor of being the greatest explorers of their day.

The first expedition that had been sent out by the Governor up the Saguenay had proved a failure, and a second one, doomed to a similar fate, had not yet returned when the two successful travellers, in the summer of 1663, escorted by three hundred Crees, glided down the St. Lawrence to save the colony from bankruptcy a second time. Had the Governor been actuated by motives of loyalty and gratitude, he would have taken them to his bosom and rewarded them for their distinguished services. Like too many other governors of his time, he had an itching palm, and under the pretext of punishing them for trading without a license, he confiscated over ninety per cent. of their furs, valued at over \$250,000.00 of our present currency, leaving them but a trifling pittance for their two years' toil, the dangers they had undergone, and the heavy expenditure incurred by them. Is it a matter of surprise that men of their stamp and ability, after being crushed by the hand that should have supported them, should determine to appeal to the

throne for some measure of justice and recognition, and, if denied them, to renounce their allegiance and seek their fortune under another flag? Traitors? No! They had practically won for their country the trade of half a continent and had placed within the reach of France a territory then rich in furs and which was afterwards to become the greatest wheat-producing area in the world: and but for the avarice and cupidity of a selfish and stupid Governor the motherland might have remained in undisputed possession of that part of America which to-day owes allegiance to Great Britain. Little did that Governor dream that these two despised young bushrangers, unskilled in diplomacy and clad in the humble garb of the *voyageurs* of the Upper Lakes, had power to introduce a force that would in a short time control the trade of the lands they had discovered, and within a century would be the most potent factor in moving England to wrest from the crown of France what was to become with the fall of Quebec the colony of British North America. England's firmest foothold in Canada was acquired through the influence and operations of the Hudson's Bay Company. England's most powerful statesmen were pledged to support that company and protect its trade, which quickly extended over the vast forests and plains which Radisson and Groseillers were ready, if accorded fair and honest treatment, to deliver into the hands of France. The great company whose operations were carried on under the protection of the flag of England owed its inception to the two neglected outcasts of the Governor at Quebec.

Groseillers went to France to submit his grievances to the King, but the Governor had also returned. The

company of the One Hundred Associates then enjoyed a monopoly of the fur trade of the colony, and little chance had Groseillers of gaining the ear of his sovereign in the face of such opposition, to which was added the unfavorable report of the intriguing Governor. At every turn he met with rebuffs and disappointment. In vain he tried to effect some arrangement by which he and his brother-in-law might engage in trade and reap some of the fruits of their labor, but his ungrateful sovereign and unsympathetic countrymen rejected all his proposals. Is it any wonder then that he joined Radisson at Port Royal, Nova Scotia, to negotiate with an English captain for a voyage to Hudson Bay? This old weather-stained sea-rover was none other than Zachariah Gillam, a celebrated character in the subsequent history of Hudson Bay. They set sail for the north, but the captain dared not venture among the icefields at that late season, so the trip was abandoned. They next engaged two ships from Boston. This venture also proved a failure, for one of the ships upon which they were to sail was wrecked upon Sable Island, the graveyard of the Atlantic, while going to the Grand Banks to lay in a store of fish for the northern voyage; and instead of reaching Hudson Bay they soon found themselves in the courts of Boston, defendants in a damage action for the loss of the wrecked vessel. The action was dismissed, but, like many other successful (?) litigants, the discouraged wanderers drew little comfort from their legal victory. Without money and under a foreign flag, they were farther than ever from the accomplishment of their purpose.

CHAPTER III.

SIR GEORGE CARTWRIGHT, one of the four envoys sent to America in 1664 to demand from the Dutch the evacuation of Manhattan and to visit the colonies and adjust outstanding differences, was in Boston at the time Radisson and Groseillers were involved in their lawsuit over the lost ship, and became deeply interested in the story of their remarkable discoveries. As he was about to sail for England the two explorers were induced to accompany him, to solicit the aid and patronage of the English King. England was at this time busily engaged in the Dutch War, and the ship upon which they sailed fell an easy prey to the enemy; and the two Frenchmen, with their illustrious patron, found themselves prisoners in the hold of the Dutch cruiser *Caper*, which landed them in Spain. They found their way to England, and unfolded their plans to King Charles, who favored the project of a voyage to Hudson Bay, but the more important business he had on hand with the Dutch called for a postponement of royal assistance; but to retain the good will of the strangers until he should be in a position to grant them more substantial aid, they were quartered in London and an allowance for their maintenance was issued from the Royal Treasury. For two years their fate hung in the balance—two years of awful suspense to men whose lives had been filled with action. France awakened at last to a realization of her lost

opportunity, but instead of making restitution to her injured sons she sought to add ignominy to their poverty by denouncing them as criminals. For his pains the spy employed to perform this contemptible service was himself cast into prison.

Prince Rupert of Bohemia, at the age of twenty, had come to England to offer his services to his uncle King Charles I. He acquitted himself with such renown that he won for himself the sobriquet of "Fiery Prince Rupert." On the high seas he had many thrilling experiences, and proved himself as efficient with the cutlass on the quarterdeck as he had formerly been with the sabre at the head of a troop of cavalry. Fortunately for the two strangers, their proposal appealed to him, and he entered into the scheme heart and soul. The necessary funds were raised, and two ships, the *Eagle* and *Nonsuch*, were fitted out for the voyage. The latter was commanded by their old acquaintance, Captain Gillam of Boston, who set out on June 3rd, 1668, with Groseillers on board, while Radisson embarked on the *Eagle*. For four years he had bided his time and chafed under his misfortunes and delays. Now the burden was lifted, and he breathed freely again as he turned his back upon civilization, sniffed the sea air, and felt that the old life in the forest was not far distant. His evil star had not yet set, for he was but fairly under way when a terrific storm forced them back again to the shelter of the Thames. Upon examination the ship was found to be no longer seaworthy, and he was forced to forego the voyage as it was then too late in the season to fit out another vessel. There was nothing for him to do but await the return of his brother-in-law, and we can read-

ily imagine the anxious weeks and months spent by him in the meantime. What if Groseillers did not reach the bay, or failed to secure a cargo of furs? A thousand doubts would flash across his mind, and his ingenuity would devise a thousand means of brushing them away again. He had already met with so many disappointments he scarcely dared to hope that success would crown this final effort. For years he had planned this voyage, and his future career depended upon the issue. Somehow he felt confident of success, although in all their former undertakings he had taken the lead and Groseillers had been content with second place. So sanguine was he that to while away the long months of waiting he set about organizing a company, assisted by Prince Rupert, whose personal influence was not so great as the royal patronage it secured.

The *Nonsuch* continued on her course, and on September 29th cast anchor at the mouth of a river at the foot of James Bay, to which was given the name of Rupert's River. Here they prepared to winter, and constructed a log fort enclosed within a stockade. In honor of King Charles his name was bestowed upon this the first trading-post upon the shores of Hudson Bay. The natives soon discovered the presence of the white men; and Groseillers lost no time in acquainting them with the object of his visit among them. By June of the following year he had gathered sufficient furs to warrant the return of the *Nonsuch*; so Gillam set sail to report to their associates in London the success of the voyage, leaving Groseillers behind to gather in more furs. Two months later a strange sloop was discovered carefully feeling her way towards the fort, and as she reached the

shallow waters at the river's mouth a small boat was lowered, and soon the familiar voice of Radisson was heard as he leaped ashore to embrace his brother-in-law.

The *Nonsuch*, under the command of the grim old captain, reached London the same month, and the merchants who had fitted her out were overjoyed with the prospects of a lucrative trade. Negotiations were soon completed for the formation of the company, the capital was forthcoming, and in May, 1670, a royal charter was issued to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay" — for such was the corporate name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Until Groseillers passed the strait with the *Nonsuch* no sail had been seen upon Hudson Bay for many years; yet in England the hope of still finding the long-sought passage to the Western Sea had not been altogether abandoned. While the real object of the newly formed company was to secure the trade of the northern part of the continent and the investment was purely a commercial venture, the promoters of the scheme shrewdly emphasized the importance of the prosecution of their discoveries and the great national advantages that were likely to accrue from their efforts in that direction. By thus assuming the rôle of public benefactors they were able the more easily to obtain grants and privileges which might otherwise have been denied them. The first recital of their petition alleges as a fact, with almost startling mendacity, that the petitioners had "at their own great cost and charges undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay, in the north-west part of America, for the discovery of a new passage into the South Sea and for the finding some trade for furs, minerals, and other

considerable commodities, and by such their undertaking have already made such discoveries as to encourage them to proceed further in pursuance of their said design, by means whereof there may probably arise very great advantages to us and our kingdom." The modest pretensions of the "Adventurers of England" as set forth in this innocent recital would never arouse a suspicion that this was the prelude to the most gigantic monopoly ever granted by the Crown to any individual or corporation on this continent. Thanks to the wily Prince Rupert and his titled associates, we find that His Majesty, "being desirous to promote all endeavors tending to the public good of our people," was pleased to grant unto his loyal petitioners and their successors "the sole trade and commerce of all these seas, straits, bays, rivers, lakes, creeks, and sounds in whatsoever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the straits commonly called Hudson's Straits, together with all the lands and territories upon the countries, coasts, and confines of the seas, bays, lakes, rivers, creeks, and sounds aforesaid that are not already actually possessed by or granted to any of our subjects, or possessed by the subjects of any other Christian prince or state, with the fishing of all sorts of fish, whales, sturgeons, and all other royal fishes, in the seas, bays, inlets, and rivers within the premises, and the fish therein taken, together with the royalty of the sea upon the coasts within the limits aforesaid, and all mines royal, as well discovered as not discovered, of gold, silver, gems, and precious stones to be found or discovered within the territories, limits, and places aforesaid, and that the said land be from henceforth reckoned and reputed as one of our

plantations or colonies in America, called 'Rupert's Land.' " The consideration for this royal gift was two elk and two black beavers to be paid yearly to the British sovereign " whensoever and as often as we, our heirs, and successors, shall happen to enter into the said countries, territories, and regions hereby granted." As the first entry to the designated lands has yet to be made, the consideration stipulated for has not proven a very heavy tax upon the treasury of the company. Thus by the stroke of a pen the little group of men presided over by the fiery prince who had been summoned a few months before to listen to the story of two French outcasts became the proprietors of the greater part of North America. It staggers us to-day when we attempt to weigh the magnitude of this grant or to estimate the meaning of these almost unlimited concessions. We may form an opinion of their extent, from the company's point of view, in their reply in 1750 to a demand from the Lords of Trades and Plantations that the directors furnish an account of the limits and boundaries of their territories. The company in reply stated that they claimed " all the lands lying on the east side or coast of the said bay, and extending from the bay eastward to the Atlantic Ocean and Davis' Strait, and the line hereafter mentioned as the east and southeastern boundaries of the said company's territories; and towards the north, all the lands that lie at the north end, or on the north side or coast of the said bay, and extending from the bay northwards to the utmost limits of the lands then towards the North Pole; but where or how these lands terminate is hitherto unknown. And towards the west, all the lands that lie on the west side or coast of the said bay,

and extending from the said bay westward to the utmost limits of those lands; but where or how these lands terminate to the westward is also unknown, though probably it will be found they terminate on the Great South Sea." To hold this territory was a far more difficult task than to acquire it. It is not within the scope of our present enquiry to follow the development and history of this wonderful company. Its career has been a chequered one and its supremacy has been maintained only at the cost of much treasure and many lives. The seas have been strewn with the wreckage of its fights, the forests have resounded with the echoes of its battles and the plains drenched with the blood of its retainers. In the legislative halls on both sides of the Atlantic, its great privileges have been the subject of many a fierce debate, and bitter epithets have been hurled across the council table within the privacy of its own chambers. Many volumes have been written in denunciation of the monopoly, and as many more in its defence. Still it survives to-day with its one hundred and fifty flourishing posts from the coast of Labrador to the Pacific Ocean; shorn, it is true, of much of its strength, yet a most important factor in the trade of the Dominion.

Interesting as the history of the company is, we can touch only upon a few leading incidents bearing upon the subject we have in hand. The granting of a charter purporting to place within the control of the English company all those territories from which annually came to the traders upon the St. Lawrence the skins upon which the colony depended for its very existence was a direct challenge to the French, whose hatred towards the English needed only this spur to goad them into open hos-

tility. With the Indians the company had little trouble; indeed their policy towards the natives from the time of their first landing upon the bay to the present time has been in marked contrast with that adopted by the white men in other parts of the continent. This may be due in some measure to the fact that it was not organized as a colonizing agency, but directed all its energies to the fur trade. That Canada in the settlement of the prairie provinces has escaped the evils that terrorized the frontiersmen of the Western States may be fairly attributed to the considerate and honest dealings of the Hudson's Bay Company with the savage tribes of the interior.

The merchants and fur-traders of New France resented the appearance of the English at the bay, and, strange to say, the first armed resistance to the pretensions of the company was headed by the very man who was most instrumental in its formation. Prior to the establishment of Fort Charles the overland voyage from the St. Lawrence to the bay had never been accomplished by any white men except the two Frenchmen now in the service of the company. In 1671 Father Albanel, acting under instructions of the Intendant of New France and accompanied by the Sieur de St. Simon and six Indians, ascended the Saguenay and successfully completed the overland trip to the shores of James Bay. The selection of a priest to perform this service and the subsequent establishment of a mission among the tribes of the north serve to illustrate the respective methods adopted by the French and English: the French always kept in view the conversion of the heathen, while the English, with an eye only to the trade, gave no thought to the pagan ceremonies of their customers. This feature of

the company's method of carrying on business gives some semblance of truth to the answer of a Westerner to a traveller whose curiosity was aroused upon seeing the mystic letters "H.B.C." painted on the front of so many buildings in the Northwest. He enquired the meaning, and a native wit made reply, "Here 'efore Christ."

The practicability of the overland route having been established, the French traders in the following years took up the trail and established a post at Moose River, about an hundred miles distant from Fort Charles and on the opposite side of James Bay. The trade with the English was intercepted and the French lost no opportunity to poison the minds of the Indians against the occupants of the other fort. Governor Bailey, then presiding over the affairs of the company at the bay, suspected Radisson and Groseillers of complicity in the operations of the French, and unwisely accused the latter of conspiring with the rivals across the bay. To this unwarranted accusation Groseillers responded with a well-directed blow of his fist which laid the Governor at his feet and terminated all further negotiations between that pompous gentleman and his two French associates. This incident and the events leading up to it were investigated by the directors, the majority of whom seemed well satisfied to be rid of the troublesome foreigners. Groseillers returned to his family at Three Rivers, and Radisson once more changed his allegiance and entered the French navy. The restraints of a life at sea were vexatious to a man accustomed to the freedom of a forest life, and a shipwreck in 1679 furnished a pretext for his returning to his old calling. He had been discredited by the English, and, owing to his having

married an English wife, the daughter of Sir John Kirke, a member of the English company, he was suspected by his own countrymen. The trade of Canada at this time was controlled by the Compagnie du Nord, at the head of which was M. de la Chesnaye, who thought he saw in Radisson the proper instrument for driving the English from Hudson Bay and regaining for his company the trade of the western and northern tribes. It was the spring of 1682 before arrangements were completed, and Radisson and Groseillers once more embarked for the north on two rickety old vessels, the *St. Pierre* and *Ste. Anne*, ill-provisioned and manned by mutinous crews. After an eventful voyage in which they barely escaped shipwreck and capture they arrived, on August 26th, at the mouth of the Hayes River, separated from the mouth of the Nelson only by a swamp and a narrow strip of land overgrown with bushes. They cast anchor about fifteen miles from the mouth, where Groseillers commenced the erection of Fort Bourbon while Radisson ascended the river in the direction of Lake Winnipeg in search of furs. In eight days he was on familiar ground which he had visited twenty years before by another route. He was fortunate in meeting a band of Crees gathering for the winter hunt, who, after a friendly greeting, promised to bring their furs to him in the spring. Thus we find the man who first piloted the furs of the Great Northwest down to the lakes to the French merchants at Quebec was also the first man to personally guide that same traffic along the rival channel to the shores of Hudson Bay. Upon his return, on September 12th, he found the fort well under way, and on the same day was startled by the reports of cannon from

the direction of Nelson River, only a few miles to the north. Upon reconnoitering he discovered a party of poachers from Boston also busily engaged in erecting a log house under command of Ben Gillam, son of the old captain, who, by the way, was at that very moment only a few miles distant, on board the *Prince Rupert*, escorting John Bridgar, the newly appointed Governor, to his station upon the bay. Radisson, with a bold front, challenged the New Englanders and professed to be in command of a large force charged with the maintenance of the sovereignty of France over that territory; but, owing to the season being so far advanced, he condescendingly consented to permit Gillam and his party to winter on the river, and as a further mark of respect towards the son of his old friend he offered to take them under his protection and save them harmless from the Indians. Instead of crossing the narrow neck of land to his own quarters at Fort Bourbon, he followed the more circuitous route down the Nelson, thence around the point, and up the Hayes River to the fort. He had scarcely reached the bay when a huge hull bristling with cannon and carrying at the masthead the colors of the Hudson's Bay Company loomed up before him. This was a little more than he had reckoned upon. Given one at a time, he would not have hesitated to cope with them, but if the two English forces should combine he might find himself in an awkward predicament. Some means must be devised to arrest the farther progress of the *Prince Rupert*, for so she proved to be, with the new Governor on board. Making for the shore, he quickly kindled a fire and sent up such a column of smoke that Captain Gillam, who always had one eye open for signs of an

Indian encampment, hove to, lowered his mainsails, and cast anchor at dusk, intending to investigate in the morning the origin of the smoke signal. On the morrow they were stirring early, and as a boat was lowered Radisson stalked boldly down to the shore, leaving the few men who were with him posted at the edge of the wood, as if commanding a large ambushed force. He challenged the occupants of the boat, among whom were Captain Gillam and the new Governor, and again proclaimed himself as the representative of His Most Christian Majesty King Louis, and demanded from the new arrivals their business in a country already in possession of the French King. After a brief parley the Governor invited him on board the *Prince Rupert*, and Radisson graciously accepted the invitation, but took good care to retain two English hostages on shore. Their conference lasted several hours, and Radisson, borrowing from his imagination, gave the Governor an elaborate description of the two magnificent ships of the French already at Fort Bourbon and of the third that he was expecting every day. The Governor was somewhat incredulous, and, in the face of his visitor's pretended strength, he declared his intention of carrying out the instructions of the Company, and immediately after the Frenchman's departure he effected a landing and commenced the erection of Fort Nelson, only nine miles from where the New Englanders were similarly engaged on Hayes' Island. The wily bushranger shrewdly divined that the old captain had some hand in the enterprise of his son, and that if he could arrange a meeting between them they probably would take good care that the two English forces should each be kept in ignorance of the proximity of the other,

as neither father nor son would care to acquaint the Governor with the errand of the Boston ship in these waters. Thus Radisson planned that the fear of detection by the Gillams would serve his end to undo them both. He succeeded in effecting a meeting between them, and, although he was not taken into their confidence, he no longer had any doubt that they were acting in collusion and that the old captain would be the last one to inform the Governor of what was going on a few miles up the river.

During the winter the *Prince Rupert* was wrecked in an ice-jam, the provisions of the company ran short, and Radisson played the part of the good Samaritan by supplying their wants. He felt that they were no longer formidable and could be overcome at any time he chose to attack them if only young Gillam were in his hands. The opportunity soon presented itself. The Bostonian had expressed a desire to visit Fort Bourbon, and, being invited to do so, he paid his respects to the Frenchman and grew very indignant upon learning that Radisson had so grossly exaggerated his force, and as he was about to return to his own quarters he was placed in custody and held a prisoner by his host, who coolly informed him that he was going to capture the New England fort that very day. Ben scorned the idea, whereupon his opponent declared that he would not only capture it but that he would proceed to the attack with no more men than were defending it; and to assure the boastful New Englander that he had no fears as to the result he sportingly gave him the privilege of selecting the attacking party from the men he saw about him. Gillam accepted the challenge, and from the occupants

of Fort Bourbon he picked out nine men upon whose strategy and daring depended the fate of his own fort. With this small party Radisson marched to Hayes' Island and captured it without firing a shot. He just as easily secured possession of the Boston ship, which offered little or no resistance owing to the unpopularity of her commander. A certain Scotchman belonging to the New England vessel managed to escape and, though pursued by the French, reached Fort Nelson and broke the intelligence of all that had taken place to Governor Bridgar, who, for several weeks, had been paying marked attention to the rum cask, in this manner seeking consolation for the loss of his ship. He was furious upon learning that young Gillam had, unknown to him, wintered but a few miles distant, and more furious still when told that Radisson had taken upon himself to discipline the poachers. Seizing a musket, he summoned all his available men and hurried away, determined to assert his authority; but the Canadians were prepared to receive him, and after a brief encounter the Governor was glad to make his escape, leaving behind him most of his men to swell the number of prisoners already in the hands of the French. Radisson followed up his success by marching upon Fort Nelson at the head of a dozen men, and in a few hours the disconsolate Governor himself and all his followers were prisoners of the master of Fort Bourbon. The French were so intent upon overpowering the occupants of the other two forts and in guarding them after being captured that they neglected to take the necessary precautions to protect their two vessels, the *St. Pierre* and *Ste. Anne*, which

met the fate of the *Prince Rupert*, and it was with difficulty they saved the Boston ship, the *Susan*.

The spring of 1683 was a busy time at Fort Bourbon. Trade with the Indians was brisk, prisoners had to be cared for and timbers were being hewed into shape to patch up the hull of the *Ste. Anne* to provide means of transportation before the arrival of the company's ships from England. In due time all was ready, the furs were stowed away, the prisoners marched out, and soon the scene of "the French villainy in Hudson's Bay" was left far behind, as the *Susan* and the reconstructed *Ste. Anne* steered for the St. Lawrence. Arriving at Quebec late in October, the New Englanders were dismissed by the Governor of New France with a reprimand and permitted to depart in the *Susan* for Boston with the irate Governor Bridgar on board. La Chesnaye, who, it will be remembered, was to share the profits of the voyage, soon learned that Radisson and Groseillers had not truly accounted for all the furs secured by them, but had, before their arrival in Quebec, clandestinely removed and appropriated a large portion of the cargo. Their raid upon the English fort threatened to cause trouble between France and England. The French Government, with the appearance at least of sincerity, demanded that they appear at Court to answer for their depredations upon the Bay. Between the charges of dishonesty preferred against them by La Chesnaye and the summons from the French Court, their stay in Canada was cut short, and on November 11th they sailed for France.

Radisson had not been long in Paris before he established himself in obscure quarters in the Fauberg St.

Antoine, where he became the picturesque centre of a crowd of admiring friends, only too willing to drink his brandy and applaud the narration of his startling adventures. France, notwithstanding her protestations, was quite prepared to retain the advantages gained by the operations of the brothers-in-law in Hudson Bay. Neither France nor the company was desirous of very close relations with Radisson, yet each was nervously apprehensive of the consequences if he should enlist again under the flag of the other. He was distrusted and feared by both, yet both paid him court and sought to engage his services. In this contest, thanks to the intrigue of Louis and Charles, the company was successful; he again changed his allegiance, and in May, 1684, again set sail for Hudson Bay. When they arrived at Fort Nelson, Groseillers' son, who had been left in charge, was greatly surprised to see his uncle serving under the flag which the year before he had trampled under his feet, and at first was not disposed to surrender the fort and its contents, but eventually, with a very poor grace, turned over everything to the English. Twelve thousand beaver skins were trundled on board the company's ships and Governor Phipps found in store enough supplies to purchase as many more. To the vexation of the French and the consternation of the Indians, the *fleur-de-lis* was hauled down and the emblem of the company once more was floated from the flagstaff of the fort. Having concluded a complete transfer of all the assets of the French, Radisson embarked upon the returning ship and upon reaching Portsmouth rode post-haste to London to give to the directors his version of what had taken place at the Bay.

Some angry words had passed between him and the Governor. The man who had been his own master from boyhood had declined to submit to the dictation even of a Governor. Each in his report maligned the other and a majority of the General Court of the Adventurers upheld the Governor and Radisson was deposed from his command. Although he remained upon the pay list of the company until the time of his death in 1710, he does not appear to have been assigned any more important position than that of overseer of purchases at the Bay during the summer months of the next seven years. What services, if any, were performed for the pension of £50 a year granted him for the rest of his life is not disclosed by the records of the company. His last years are in striking contrast with his early career, and the old war-horse must have longed to join the fray. as he scanned the reports of the lively times that followed his enforced retirement. France had placed a price upon his head, and the English were not disposed to risk their cause in his hands. Distasteful as it must have been to a man of his temperament, he sat an idle spectator of the fight for the prize that he felt was rightfully his. For one hundred and sixty years after his death that fight continued, a fight for the dominion of that great lone land which he was the first to discover, and it is only in recent years, after his ashes have lain for two centuries in an unknown grave, that the world has been reminded that Pierre Esprit Radisson, with all his faults, stands alone, the greatest of all Canadian explorers.

CHAPTER IV.

It could hardly be expected that La Chesnaye and his associates, forming the *Compagnie du Nord*, would quietly submit to the treachery of Radisson in handing over to the English the fruits of the expedition which they had fitted out. Popular opinion in Canada was so decidedly in favor of the French company that the populace of Quebec burnt in effigy the traitors Radisson and Groseillers, and scores of young men volunteered to go to the bay to recover the lost forts. The Marquis de Denonville, the newly-appointed Governor, deplored the loss to the colony and joined in the general cry for redress by sending a despatch to the king pointing out the necessity for an invasion of Hudson Bay. These demands for satisfaction culminated in 1685 in the granting of a commission to the Chevalier de Troyes to expel the English from their posts in the north. The Sieur D'Iberville, a young man but twenty-five years of age, was chosen as one of the lieutenants of the expedition. Sprung from a father whose distinguished services in the Indian wars had made him the recipient of a baronial seat and title, he had been schooled from infancy in the development of the colonial military defences. At the age of twelve he had accompanied Frontenac and La Salle when they ascended the St. Lawrence and founded Fort Frontenac. He graduated in the naval science by several years' service upon the

king's ships, and was in every way well qualified for the work in hand. He acquitted himself with such gallantry that he was soon assigned an independent command. For ten years he was the terror of the north, and his fame in the wars of Hudson Bay has won for him the title of the Cid of New France. A volume could be filled with an account of his exploits against the English, but we will content ourselves with a brief review of the most thrilling of his adventures, which will illustrate his daring and the determined struggle for supremacy in the North during the closing years of the seventeenth century. For twelve years or more the rival parties had been flying at each other's throats, never losing an opportunity to scuttle a ship or seize a fort, and in the hottest of the strife D'Iberville always took a leading part. Fort after fort was captured and re-captured, but Fort Nelson, the most alluring prize of them all, as it commanded, more than any other, the trade of the West, had fallen but once into the hands of the French, who, unable to hold it longer than a few months, had capitulated upon terms which the English did not respect. To D'Iberville was assigned the task of again expelling them, and in the execution of it perhaps his gallantry and skill show to best advantage.

In the summer of 1697, fresh from a victorious campaign in Newfoundland, in which he had, with unprecedented rapidity and endurance, pillaged and destroyed every fishing station but two upon the island, he sailed from the port of Placentia in command of five ships, the *Pelican*, the *Palmier*, the *Profound*, the *Wasp* and the *Esquimaux*. About the same time, bound for the same waters, the *Hampshire*, the *Hudson's Bay*,

the *Dering* and *Owner's Love* filed out of Portsmouth harbor. Two days in advance of the enemy, the English ships entered the strait and found their progress impeded by the ice. Great bergs, tottering over the rough sea like drunken sailors, crashing into each other and grinding their lesser companions to atoms, threatened the destruction of both fleets. The *Esquimaux*, laden with supplies for the other ships, was cautiously feeling her way alongside one of these ghostly monsters, which was severed with a deafening roar, and tons of ice, falling as it were from the clouds, staved in her decks and bulwarks. With difficulty the crew was rescued as the shattered ship and her precious cargo disappeared beneath the ice floes. The *Profound*, by avoiding the currents, overtook two of the company's fleet and engaged them in a long-range target practice long enough to enable D'Iberville on the *Pelican* to slip by unobserved. Taking advantage of this unexpected piece of good fortune, he left the other ships to care for themselves and steered direct for Fort Nelson. For two days he hovered about the fort awaiting the arrival of his consort, and his anxiety as to their fate was not relieved when three ships floating the British flag, the *Hampshire*, *Dering* and *Hudson's Bay*, in the order named, appeared in the offing bearing down upon the *Pelican*. They carried in all 114 guns and 350 men against his 50 guns and 150 men ready for action, for, although his full complement was over 200, a number of these had been sent ashore, and forty or fifty were sick and unable to take any part in the battle; but he was not the man to forego an engagement because the advantage appeared to be with the enemy. He directed

the prow of the *Pelican* straight towards the foremost of the advancing ships, which cleverly evaded his apparent attempt to board her and discharged a broadside at him, which might have terminated the battle disastrously for D'Iberville had not the *Hampshire*, in rising from the trough of the sea, rolled so heavily that the gunners missed their aim and the shot passed harmlessly over the gallant Canadian, the other two receiving, as he passed on between them, two well-directed volleys from the cannon of the *Pelican*.

The *Dering* replied with a destructive fusilade of musket-fire and grape, which was followed by a general volley of all the English ships into the rigging of the *Pelican* with the view of crippling her. D'Iberville manoeuvred again to board the *Hampshire*, but again the English captain cleverly glided out of his reach, but received a terrific riddling from the French cannon. At the same time the *Hudson's Bay* had been pouring her shot into the forecastle of the enemy's ship. For three and one-half hours the deadly struggle continued, until all four ships were battered and splintered. The rigging was torn and broken, and the decks, slippery with blood, were strewn with mangled corpses. The *Hampshire* had suffered most, and, as her hull sank deeper and deeper, she became unmanageable, and it was apparent her fighting days were over. Above the cries of the wounded on the *Pelican* could be heard the voice of the untiring commander ordering an attack upon the *Dering*, which promptly showed her heels and made for the open sea. D'Iberville dared not risk a chase with his crippled ship, so turned his attention to the *Hudson's Bay*, which, unable to cope with the French any longer, sur-

rendered a few minutes before the waters closed over the sinking flag-ship.

The naval victory was complete, but over Fort Nelson the company's flag still floated, and a more relentless foe had yet to be overcome before even an attempt could be made towards its capture. No sooner had the victor claimed his prize than the sea was lashed into a foam and the angry waves dashed over the two remaining ships, the next moment tossed them about upon the heaving billows, then, racing on with a tumultuous roar, rolled up in huge breakers on the shore. In vain the sailors attempted to launch the small boats, and with the darkness came the constant fear of being stranded. On board the *Pelican* the wounded all night long lay shivering in heaps, tossed about by the plunging of the vessel, and above the creaking of the timbers could be heard the moans of the dying. In the early morning they abandoned the wreck and, wading to their necks in the ice-cold water, bearing their wounded above their heads or dragging them through the surf, the shore was reached. Plodding through drifts of snow knee-deep, they encamped in a wood about six miles from the fort, where, still suffering from their undressed wounds and the agony of the awful night, no less than eighteen died from exposure. The *Hudson's Bay*, having lost her rudder and parted her cable, drifted at the mercy of the storm and was cast upon a bank eight miles south of the fort. Fortunately the wreck lay near a marshy tract with water but knee deep, which circumstance enabled them to effect a landing with less difficulty than the crew of the *Pelican*, and, when once ashore, they were cared for by their fellow-countrymen in the fort. The French

were soon relieved by the arrival of the *Profound*, the *Palmier* and the *Wasp* with the needed reinforcements for the attack upon the fort. In dire distress for want of food and shivering in their improvised shelters, they were eager for the fight and lost no time in landing their guns and placing them in position, and awaited but the word of command to charge the enemy.

Within the fort a far different feeling prevailed. The servants of the company had not enlisted for war, and in the naval engagement of a few days before they had ample evidence of the valor of the foe. Governor Bailey stormed and swore at the audacity of the French in demanding, after a faint attack, an unconditional surrender, and succeeded for a time in rousing the spirits of his men by promising a pension to each of their widows. The bombardment was renewed, and into the fort was poured a storm of shot and shell, and whenever the company's men mustered sufficient courage to appear beyond the stockade the Frenchmen rushed madly forward, brandishing their weapons and shouting the Indian war-cry, and drove them back within the enclosure. A final summons to surrender, accompanied with a threat to carry the fort at the point of the bayonet, convinced the Governor that further resistance was useless. Terms of capitulation were arranged, the British marched out and D'Iberville once more was installed master of Fort Nelson.

If France had appreciated what the dauntless young Canadian had done, the history of Canada might have been of little interest to-day to us of British birth, for with the fall of Fort Nelson the English company lost its only foothold in Hudson Bay. France already con-

trolled the St. Lawrence, and, thanks to D'Iberville, she held the keys of the north and was in a position to shut out the great company from the interior and thus become absolute master of all the territory now under the Canadian flag.

At the very hour that D'Iberville was taking stock of the booty gained by his late victories, the French and English commissioners were gathered about a table in a little Dutch village affixing their signatures to the Treaty of Ryswick, which restored Fort Albany to the English, and sixteen years later, by the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, France renounced all her claims to Hudson Bay. The former treaty checked for a time hostilities in the North, but the mother country had other work for D'Iberville and commissioned him to carry out the neglected plans of La Salle by founding a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi and thus again forestall the English, who at that time were contemplating the establishment of posts along that great waterway to tap the trade of the interior by a southern route. During these troublesome years the English seemed content to confine their dealings with the Indians to such as reached their posts upon the bay, while the French were steadily pushing westward and at Michilimackinac had founded a fort which rivalled in importance the older headquarters on the St. Lawrence. The French-Canadian was at home upon the trail and did not hesitate to travel a thousand miles inland to secure a cargo of furs. The company's servants on the Bay could live in comparative comfort in their snug barracks, but, with rare exceptions, were ill-suited for a wandering life in the wilderness.

One striking exception to the disinclination of the occupants of the forts to penetrate to the interior was Henry Kelsey, a mere lad but eighteen years of age, who, in 1691, appears to have visited the tribes beyond the land of the Assiniboinés, to have reached the haunts of the buffalo and the grizzly bear, and to have secured for the first time the trade of these remote districts.

That the French did not obtain all the furs of the West was largely due to the fact that the English paid the higher price, and for the sake of an extra hatchet or a few additional pounds of powder, Indians would join the annual pilgrimage to the company's factories, spending months upon the way, rather than visit the nearer stations of the French. To intercept the Indians on their way to an English post was the chief business of a lawless class of bushrangers known as the *coureurs de bois*. These outcasts of civilization lived a roving life in the woods, owned allegiance to no sovereign, and earned a precarious living by conducting the Indians to the posts of the French fur traders. With no greater gain than a hatful of worthless trinkets or a few gallons of poisonous brandy, many a flotilla, heading for Fort Albany, changed its course for Michillimackinac.

After the Treaty of Utrecht the French retired from the northern waters and the company was, for a time at least, free from any further local disturbances, but their rivals, being ousted from the bay, increased their efforts in other directions to regain the trade that for years had gone to the northern posts. The opposition was not from New France alone, as a new competitor soon entered the field, who also had to be reckoned with. The Governor of New York, recognizing that direct trade

with the Indians would be more profitable than the indirect exchange of merchandise for furs through the traders of Montreal and Quebec, prohibited the latter by an Act of the Assembly, and, to foster the former, caused a post to be established at Oswego, on Lake Ontario. The merchants upon the St. Lawrence, who had served as middlemen between the Indians and the New York tradesmen, were by this means deprived of no small portion of their business. This unexpected interruption of the trade passing down Lake Ontario spurred the Frenchmen on to venture farther west into the remotest hunting grounds, and greater inducements were held out to the *courcurs de bois* to secure the cargoes for the Canadian warehouses. New territories were being constantly explored, new tribes drawn into the trade and new posts opened up. The competitors, large and small, often followed the same trail and, as sometimes occurred, but a few furlongs separated their respective encampments, and the silent forest was the only witness of many a contest over a disputed bale of furs. In these conflicts it was not always a case of English against French or the St. Lawrence against Hudson Bay, but many a lawless bushranger, in need of a new gun or ammunition, would not stop to enquire the nationality or allegiance of the owner of a passing canoe, if he considered its contents would furnish him with the wherewithal to purchase his pressing needs.

CHAPTER V.

FOR a long time Michillimackinac had marked the western limit of the trading posts of New France, and, until the trade of Lake Superior began to assume important dimensions, this old mission station retained the distinction of being the western boundary of civilized occupation. If we turn to our maps we shall find that it forms a natural link in the chain of travel between the East and West and was favorably situated as a *rendezvous* for the tribes along the shores of the Upper Lakes.

Although Radisson had in the early sixties visited the Indian lodges of the Great Northwest, the seventeenth century witnessed little advance in the work so auspiciously begun by him. During this period there were not wanting daring explorers and famous traders, but their operations were pretty well confined to the territory south of the boundary. Then it was that Joliet and Marquette discovered the Mississippi and La Salle followed it to its mouth. Its upper valley was traversed by Father Hennepin and Nicholas Pinot, and Du Lhut, the prince of *coureurs de bois*, explored the lands of the Sioux and carried on an extensive trade with the Crees and the Assiniboines. In 1717 De Lanoué conceived the idea of fixing a base further west and built at Kaminstiquia, near the site of Fort William, a fort, which, for the century following, was the scene of many an exciting

struggle in the race for the beaver skins from the territory beyond. Farther west an occasional *voyageur* had strayed, but, up to this time, no permanent buildings had been constructed nor any attempt made to establish a regular trading post, except the little fort built by Radisson nearly sixty years before, which could hardly be classed with the imposing structures at Fort William. He had demonstrated the practicability of reaching the Indians of the plains, but generations were to pass away before anyone could be found bold enough to follow in his footsteps, and the first man worthy to be called his successor, like him, received his training in the rough school of experience.

In a little fur-trading post, north of Michillimackinac, concealed in the depths of the forest out of the path of the warlike Iroquois, waited the man upon whose shoulders the mantle of Radisson was to fall. From eighteen years of age to twenty-six he had followed the fortunes of war, fighting in the new world and the old, and at the battle of Malplaquet had been carried off the field for dead. He was brave, loyal and fond of adventure, and to his experience in the army he had added eighteen years in the forest. He had witnessed the annual arrival of far-off Indian tribes with their bundles of furs, had caught the rumors of the great sea that lay beyond, and, as they departed towards the setting sun, his heart yearned to follow them to their distant villages. As he sat in his lonely cabin at Nepigon, wandered through the dense forest, or listened to the tales of the Indians, the great beyond beckoned to him to come and lift the veil that shrouded in mystery the Great Western Sea, whose

shores no white man yet had reached by an overland route across the continent.

This solitary occupant of the little log hut built on the verge of that great unknown region was Pierre Gautier de Varennes de la Vérendrye. Chafing under his confinement until he could no longer restrain his burning desire for discovery, he set out in 1731 to lay his plans before Governor Beauharnois at Quebec, who was favorably disposed towards the project and entertained him for some time as a guest at the Chateau. The Government could not be moved to grant him any financial assistance, but informed him that he might embark upon his voyage of discovery and could enjoy a monopoly of the fur trade of all new territories opened up by him. This might have been a strong inducement to some, but to the man whose chief aim was discovery it meant that he must be a trader first and a discoverer afterwards, and this was not to his desire, as it called for months, perhaps years, of delay in building up a trade before he would be able to devote himself to the main object he had in view. Hampered as he was by such conditions, he looked about for the means of equipping his expedition, and found the Quebec merchants ready to advance the supplies upon the usual terms of collecting the furs and forwarding them to his creditors to meet his payments. He set out in May, 1732, and in eleven weeks' time, after a short rest at Michillimackinac, he reached Kaministiquia. Thus far they travelled over a comparatively familiar route, but during the latter part of it encountered very rough weather upon the lake. The real expedition of discovery was to begin at this point, but, instead of finding his men eager to proceed, they rebelled

against the proposal to go any farther that season with the prospect of finding themselves in the wilderness at the approach of winter with no certain means of warding off starvation. He finally prevailed upon one-half of his *voyageurs* to continue the journey under the command of his nephew Jemmeraie, while the other half remained behind to spend the winter at Kaministiquia. Jemmeraie pushed forward with his little band, and, reaching Rainy Lake, constructed Fort St. Pierre, near the site of the present town of Fort Frances, the first permanent trading post west of Lake Superior. The neighboring Crees flocked to the little fort with great bales of furs, only too glad to find a market at their very door. The trade was so brisk that before the winter passed the supply of goods had been exhausted, and as soon as the lakes were free of ice Jean, the explorer's eldest son, set out for Michillimackinac to exchange the beaver skins already obtained for a fresh supply of merchandise.

The father meanwhile moved out of his winter quarters, and on July 14th reached Fort St. Pierre, so named after himself. The Indians welcomed the leader, who was introducing the new order of things, and volunteered to furnish him with an escort to Lake of the Woods. They did not need to repeat the offer, as he had already been marking time for nearly a year. Jean had not yet returned with the much-needed supplies, and, although he had his own misgivings about proceeding with such a scanty supply of provisions, his dream of that Great Western Sea outweighed all other considerations and he set out at once. In the van on either flank moved fifty gayly decorated canoes, a guard of honor for the great

white chieftain. To the rhythmic strokes of the dusky boatmen the flotilla entered the Lake of the Woods and glided along the shores of the wooded islands, which furnished a welcome shelter from the blazing midsummer sun. As they reached the western shore the escort left to prepare for the winter hunt, and Vérendrye began the construction of the second of the series of trading posts, the landmarks of advancing civilization, and, in honor of his patron, the Governor, he christened it Fort St. Charles. Thus, step by step, could he have followed up his plan if he had received the needed assistance, but the terms imposed upon him required that the expedition should be self-supporting. The merchants at Montreal cared little for the Western Sea, so long as they received in furs a fair return for the goods supplied by them. Vérendrye cared little for the furs, except as a means to the end he had in view. So far the returns from the fur trade had not met the expenses, and, although Jean had brought back some merchandise and provisions from Michillimackinac, yet it was wholly inadequate to meet their wants for more than a few months. Even to-day, with all our modern conveniences in travel, a trip from Winnipeg to Montreal is considered quite an undertaking, and to attempt it in a canoe would appear nothing short of madness. If we could picture to ourselves the difficulties of travel one hundred and eighty years ago, bearing in mind that no towns and villages along the way were ready to cater to the weary traveller and that every bend in the river was likely to disclose a hostile band of savages waiting to add more scalps to their belts, we could the better appreciate the explorer's frame of mind, when he found it

necessary to despatch his nephew upon this long and perilous trip to endeavor to persuade the merchants to forward him more goods.

During Jemmerraie's absence Vérendrye remained at Fort St. Charles, but sent Jean forward to complete one more step in the western advance. This he did by constructing Fort Maurepas, on Lake Winnipeg.

Jemmerraie returned with the disheartening news that the merchants refused further assistance. Another winter was passed in comparative idleness, and the unpaid *voyageurs* were loud in their complaints. With the opening of spring came the opportunity for pushing forward, but nothing could be done in the wilderness with fifty men face to face with a threatened famine. The remaining supplies were divided and the fifty men distributed among the three forts, and the undaunted Vérendrye himself undertook the long voyage to the St. Lawrence to seek further aid. More valuable time was wasted, a long and arduous trip performed, and all the while a restless retinue had to be maintained at an enormous expense, because of the lack of means to carry out his plans.

The Governor received him kindly and again insisted upon his spending the winter at the Chateau. While the chief executive sympathized with Vérendrye in his financial difficulties, he was unable to obtain any grant from the Crown, as France in this, as in most matters appertaining to the colony, did not awaken to the importance of the real question at stake until it was too late to retrieve the lost ground. She was ever ready to assert her title to the new territories discovered by her loyal and enthusiastic sons, but very slow to give assistance in the

prosecution of those discoveries. It surpasses our comprehension that a government, recklessly extravagant in some respects, could sit idly by and see the boundaries of New France expanding in all directions through private enterprise, and too frequently at the cost of the lives and fortunes of her explorers, and stubbornly refuse to open her coffers to assist them. The merchants, who quite naturally regarded their investments solely from a business point of view, grumbled at their losses, but rather than lose what was already invested they consented to make further advances. Vérendrye hastened back, leaving the supplies to follow, and reached Fort St. Charles in September, 1735.

Winter set in earlier than usual and with it a series of calamities that would have driven to despair a less tenacious and determined leader. Jemmeraie had become anxious over the long absence of his uncle and, setting out to meet him and help bring in the supplies, he died upon the way. The expected goods could not be forwarded over the ice-bound rivers, and the garrisons at the three new forts suffered all the pangs of a winter famine. Even the forest and lakes, which ordinarily never failed to yield a bountiful supply of game and fish, seemed to conspire against the starving Frenchmen. Only by the strictest economy and short rations did they manage to survive the long and severe winter, and during the last stages their dogs and moccasins and such roots as they could dig out of the frozen ground all found their way to the stew kettles to eke out their scanty fare. But the heaviest blow was yet to follow, and that, too, at a time when they had reason to believe that fortune had already decreed her worst. Early in June Jean Véren-

drye, who had proven himself a great source of strength to his father, particularly since the loss of Jemmerraie, set out for Michillimackinae for more wares to barter with the Indians, for as yet no word had reached them of the canoes from Montreal. The party consisted of Jean, twenty *voyageurs* and Father Aulneau, who, the year before, had returned with Vérendrye from Quebec to assume the duties of chaplain of the expedition. With light hearts they marched out of the fort, took their places in the canoes, and, waving a farewell to their friends upon the shore, plied their swift paddles in time to their rollicking boat-song, little dreaming the awful fate that awaited them. At the end of that day's journey, while sleeping about their camp fire, a band of Sioux crept silently upon them and massacred the entire party. The decapitated bodies and the mutilated heads of the unoffending victims were reverently borne to Fort St. Charles and interred in one grave beneath the chapel. Within the last few months the ghastly relics of this cruel tragedy were discovered where they had been laid nearly two hundred years before.

This last crushing blow staggered the already careworn father, who had been accustomed to divide the burden of his undertaking with his nephew and son. The loss was felt the more keenly as it proved to be an unnecessary errand, for a week after the news of the massacre reached them the supplies from Montreal arrived in charge of his youngest son, Louis. Trade with the Indians was renewed at all three posts. Vérendrye himself pushed forward to Fort Maurepas and soon disposed of all the goods his partners had sent him. He would gladly have continued his progress westward, but he was

pledged to look well after the trade, so back again he hurried to Montreal with such heavy cargoes of furs that the merchants readily advanced him a fresh supply. He spent the winter of 1738 again with the Governor at Quebec and by September 1st was back again at Fort Maurepas. We may see already the effect of the onerous conditions imposed upon him. Three times since first setting out the trip to Quebec has been repeated, once by his nephew and twice by himself, and enough distance was covered in these three journeys to carry him to the Pacific Ocean and back again. Owing to the lack of means we find him still at Fort Maurepas, not one step farther west than had been reached by Jean four years before.

For the first time for four years the pathway was open before him, no obstacles seemed to bar his farther progress, and he lost no time in getting under way. The Red River empties into Lake Winnipeg not far from the site of Fort Maurepas, so out upon its waters glided the canoes of the impatient explorer once more onward bound for the Great Western Sea. Reaching the Forks, the confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine, he called a halt, for with a prophetic eye he saw that here was the natural gathering-place for the trade of the vast area traversed by these two streams. A small Indian encampment on the south bank was the only sign of human habitation; but far out on the rolling prairies, revelling in the rank grass, great herds of fat buffalo lumbered lazily along until startled by the approaching hunter, when they broke into a furious gallop, shaking the very earth in their onward rush. Here, under the name of Fort Rouge, he hurriedly put together a rough cabin,

from which insignificant beginning has arisen the city of Winnipeg. He did not tarry long at the point, but, choosing the northerly branch, the Assiniboine, the canoes were launched again, and once more the journey westward was resumed.

The travellers were now in the land of the Assiniboinés, who flocked to the river banks and gazed in wonder upon the white men. The soldiers lightened the canoes by walking over the prairie, jostled by the curious Indians and joining with them in the buffalo chase. Thus for a week they followed the course of the Assiniboine as far west as Portage la Prairie. It was now the month of October, and winter would soon be upon them. The men set to work with a will, gathered timbers from the fringe of trees along the river's banks, hewed them into shape, and put them into place; and in ten days' time they were comfortably settled in Fort La Reine, which marked one more step in the white man's western progress.

The Indian at his best was an unreliable authority regarding distant lands and people, as his information too frequently was handed down from generation to generation, passing scores of times from mouth to mouth, each one varying a little in detail to suit his particular fancy. The tepees of the Assiniboinés dotted the plains about the new fort, and from them Vérendrye learned the story that a tribe of Indians, the Mandans, dwelling upon the banks of the Missouri, were accustomed to trade with another tribe who dwelt upon the shores of a great salt sea. This was a rather unstable foundation upon which to base any definite conclusion. Had the enquirer kept due west his course to the Pacific would have been

greatly shortened, but having no certain knowledge of the coast line of the great salt sea, he could not do otherwise than act upon the only information that was available. The autumn leaves were turning when, with fifty picked Frenchmen and his two eldest sons, Pierre and François, he left Fort La Reine for the Mandans. The Assiniboines to the number of one hundred or more struck their tepees, and from mingled motives of curiosity and respect followed the Frenchmen, taking all their worldly possessions with them. For several weeks they moved along over the prairie towards the Missouri, meeting here and there a small encampment or hunting party of the same tribe, who joined their brethren to swell the procession, which numbered nearly seven hundred souls when on December 3rd, 1738, Vérendrye was ceremoniously conducted by the Mandan chiefs to a large mud council chamber in the centre of the village. Clustered about were the huts of the villagers, resembling huge bee-hives, differing in construction from any Indian habitation the white men had ever visited. The walls were of earth, two or three feet thick, reinforced by poles and willow branches. Around the village was a ditch and stockade in the construction of which considerable skill was displayed. In common with all Indian tribes—and we might add civilized nations even of to-day—the Mandans deemed the stomach the most fitting channel through which to reach the hearts of their guests. Feast followed feast in such rapid succession that the Frenchmen found little time to prosecute their enquiries about the long-sought Western Sea, and the horde of Assiniboines who had accompanied them revelled in the good things provided through the hospi-

talities of the villagers. In the midst of the revels the presents Vérendrye had brought with him for distribution among the Indians mysteriously disappeared, and his interpreter eloped with an Assiniboine maiden. These two mishaps, if such they may be termed, were more serious than might at first appear, so serious indeed that he concluded to abandon the voyage for the time, and immediately set out for Fort La Reine, leaving two of his party to winter with the Mandans and acquire their language. He now began to feel the effects of a life of toil and exposure, and his strong frame was bending under the strain. Travelling in midwinter was burdensome enough at its best, but to a man fifty-four years of age, racked with pain and consumed with fever, the journey proved very trying; but he plodded on through blizzards and snowdrifts, and reached his destination on February 11th, 1739.

In the following September the two Frenchmen who had been left behind returned to Fort La Reine and reported that during their stay with the Mandans they had met an Indian chief of a strange tribe who professed to be able to conduct them to the shores of the great salt sea. He had further described the white men living along the coast, who answered so well the description of the Spaniards in California that the two interpreters and Pierre Vérendrye were sent to follow up the clue; but, as no guides could be obtained to conduct them, they returned again from the Mandan villages no wiser than before.

It was the spring of 1742 before another attempt was made, and this time there were only four Frenchmen in the party under the leadership of the two sons, Pierre

and the Chevalier. They made straight for their old friends the Mandans, who informed them that they expected soon to receive a visit from a friendly tribe, the Horse Indians, who would guide them to the Pacific Ocean; but they themselves would not venture to do so through fear of their hereditary enemies the Sioux. The impatient travellers watched the weeks and months roll by with no sign of the tribe from whom they expected such important aid. Securing two guides, they set out towards the west not knowing whither their course would lead them, but they cherished the hope that they would fall in with some wandering band that would help them out of their difficulty. For three weeks the little party jogged along over the prairie, now breaking into a sharp gallop as they descried against the horizon some dark moving objects which they easily mistook for mounted horsemen but which proved to be a herd of buffalo. Occasionally they would digress from their course and follow up a stream, to meet another disappointment as a group of startled antelope scampered up the banks and bounded away through the tall grass.

They had reached the Powder River range, and, selecting a conspicuous mound, upon it they pitched their tent, and for five weeks the smoke of their camp-fire — a well-known signal among all Indian tribes — failed to bring any response. At the end of the fifth week their patience was rewarded by seeing an answering column of smoke a few miles distant which proved to be from the camp of a band of Les Beaux Hommes Indians. They welcomed the Frenchmen, who with difficulty explained that they were searching for the Horse tribe. One of the Mandan guides had deserted some weeks before and the other had

fled in fright upon discovering that the new arrivals were enemies of their tribe, thus leaving the party without an interpreter. This wandering band were quite content with their surroundings, as game was plentiful, the pasturage excellent, and the warm September weather all that could be desired. It was three weeks before a number of the young braves could be prevailed upon to act as guides. After several days' travel in a southwesterly direction they reached a village of the Horse Indians. They eagerly questioned the chief about the great salt sea, and bitter was their disappointment when he disclaimed any definite knowledge of it; but he was prepared with the same old familiar story which, like the will-o'-the-wisp, had for years lured on the weary travellers. If the Frenchmen would continue on a few suns farther to the southwest they would meet a tribe, the Bow Indians, who could surely point the way to the ocean. On they went, and reached the Bows just as they were setting out upon an expedition against the Snakes, a fierce mountain tribe who a few months before had surprised and slaughtered or carried away into slavery the entire population of seventeen villages of their neighbors the Horse Indians. The white men were invited to join them, and were assured that when they reached the mountains they would be able to look down upon the waters of the great sea. Eagerly they joined the motley cavalcade, which stretched out for miles upon the plains. Horses and dogs were the chief burden-bearers. The ends of two of the poles that formed the framework of the tepees were lashed to the sides of the animals, while the free ends dragged upon the ground. The skins used for the covering of these primitive tents

were fastened to the poles, and in the hollow thus formed were packed the effects of the family, surmounted by a chubby papoose or some other member of the household for whom a separate mount could not be provided. Westward they moved, joined from time to time upon the march by friendly hands, all bent upon wreaking a terrible vengeance upon their common foe the Snakes. Leaving the women, children, and old men in a sheltered spot among the low ranges of the foot-hills, the warriors hastened forward towards the Rockies, hoping to surprise the enemy; but none of them appeared, although traces of a recent encampment were found. The allies, fearing that the Snakes might, by a circuitous route, reach their unprotected families in the foot-hills, hurriedly retraced their steps. The Chevalier had gone forward with the younger men on the war-path, leaving his younger brother behind in charge of the baggage; and now, as he stood at the foot of the snow-capped barriers that alone, as he believed, concealed from him a view of the rolling billows of the long-sought sea, he yearned to scale those glittering peaks and feast his eyes upon the welcome scene, that he might return to his father with the gladsome news. The Indians were obdurate and would listen to no arguments for a farther advance, so he reluctantly abandoned for the time the one great purpose to which father and sons had consecrated their lives. The great sea had not been found, but they had traced from its eastern limit to its western bounds that great inland sea of prairie whose golden waves of ripening wheat now yield the richest harvest of the world.

The camp was reached and found to be secure, and, although it was midwinter, the long march was resumed.

As they neared the Missouri the white men parted company with the Bows, who regretfully bade them farewell, and their sorrow at losing such esteemed companions could only be appeased by a promise upon the part of the Frenchmen to return again to their villages. The object of this digression was to visit the Choke-cherry Indians—so named from the extensive use made by them of this wild fruit as an article of food. With this tribe they remained until April; then, following up the Missouri, they reached the Mandans in May, and, as they had already been absent more than a year, they rested but a few days, then, resuming their journey, entered the gates of Fort La Reine on July 2nd, 1743.

The father's anxiety was relieved by the safe return of his sons, whose long absence had caused him considerable uneasiness, and he eagerly listened to the story of their experiences.

The returns from the fur trade had not satisfied his creditors, and rival traders did not scruple to accuse him of private speculations to the prejudice of the partnership business. Governor Beauharnois and his successor, Galissonière, both upheld Vérendrye, but their moral support was all the assistance they could render him. He however succeeded in collecting another supply of goods preparatory for another trip, as he had again returned to the East. These supplies were forwarded to his posts, and he was about to follow them in one final effort to reach the goal he had sought so long; but the rough experiences of a life devoted to the welfare of a thankless country had racked that rugged frame and undermined his iron constitution. In tardy recognition of his valuable services, France honored him with the

cross of the Order of St. Louis, 1749, but, with his task undone, he died in December of the same year. His task undone? No! True, he went to his grave bowed down with disappointment, but he could have closed his eyes with the comfort and satisfaction of having done a noble work could he have foreseen the prosperous cities rising upon the foundations laid by him, the great overland railways now traversing his lonely trails, and the happy nations now peopling the plains that he and his faithful sons were the first to cross to their western boundary.

His sons endeavored to carry on the work of their father, but unfortunately La Galissonnière was recalled to France, and the Marquis de la Jonquière was appointed Governor and François Bigot Intendant. This worthy pair, regardless of their own official duties and with no respect for the rights of the heirs of the dead explorer, found a ready tool in M. de Saint Pierre to rob the Vêrendrye brothers of the fruits of the labor of their father and themselves. In vain did the sons ask for a renewal to them of the commission granted to their father, with the privileges accompanying it. The forts they had built with their own hands were confiscated, together with the goods their father had sent forward for use upon the expedition he had in contemplation at the time of his death. For three years, from 1750 to 1753, Saint Pierre, making his headquarters at Fort La Reine, carried on an irregular trade with the neighboring Indians, and sent a small party up the Saskatchewan, which had previously been discovered by the Chevalier de la Vêrendrye. On the site of the present city of Calgary they built a small fort which they named Fort

La Jonquière. Saint Pierre was not long in learning that the pathway of the fur-trader and explorer was strewn with many obstacles that he had not anticipated. More than once he and his followers were reduced to the verge of starvation; sickness deprived him of the services of some of his ablest men, and he was constantly in trouble with the Indians.

Already the presence of the English at Hudson Bay began to be felt, and he attributed the hostile attitude of the western tribes to the influence of the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. He had stifled the progress of the Vérendrye brothers, had accomplished little himself, and in the spring of 1753 was glad to quit Fort La Reine, which the Indians burned to the ground immediately after his departure.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH the fall of Quebec began the decline of the French fur-traders, and for a time the Hudson's Bay Company's storehouses were packed to the rafters with the products of the hunt. The calling of the *courcours de bois* was gone, and, accustomed as they were to spending months upon the trail, they were ill-suited to the life of the *habitant*; but they must choose between the civilized settlers and the savages. With the latter many of them cast their lot, often carrying with them the worst vices of their own race. With no other home than the shifting wigwam and no higher aim in life than the beasts they hunted in the forest, they lost all traces of civilization and sank to the level of the Indian, with but few of his redeeming features. The descendants of their mixed marriages, in many instances inheriting the worst qualities of both races, formed no small proportion of the *Métis* or *Bois-brûlés* (Charcoal Faces) who in after years clustered about the trading-posts of the North-West Fur Company and proved such a menace to the white settlers of the Red River Colony.

For several years prior to the conquest a thrifty class of Scotch Highlanders had found their way to Canada, and now that the obnoxious licensing system of the French no longer hampered the trade, they saw the prospect of profitable returns from a trip to the North-West. They were soon joined by a number of discharged

soldiers from the disbanded British regiments. These irregular traders sought to gather up the loose ends of the disorganized French trade, but without the aid of the *coureurs de bois* the Indians could not be easily reached, and there was at that time but little in common between the English trader and the French bushranger. The Indians too were not easily reconciled to the changes in the East, which cut them off from their old friends, and their antipathy to the conquerors was manifested in the mysterious disappearance of scores of defenceless traders and culminated in all its savage fury in the treacherous massacre of the garrison at Michillimackinac in 1763. The best of the furs still found their way to the forts on Hudson Bay, and the company, encouraged by the enormous profits, increased the number of their factories and pushed farther into the interior to check the steady advance of the persevering Scotchmen from Quebec and Montreal. Thus they enjoyed a practical monopoly until 1784, when a more formidable rival, the North-West Fur Company, entered the field.

Joseph and Benjamin Frobisher and Simon McTavish, names that recall many an exciting scene, were the leading spirits in this new enterprise which resulted in the formation of a partnership without any original cash capital, to which each member contributed a due proportion of the supplies necessary for the western trade and shared proportionately in the profits of the venture. Three years after its organization it was strengthened by the absorption of another independent trading concern, taking over the staff of the latter, among them being a hardy young Scotchman, Alexander Mackenzie, whose energy and perseverance were to win for him a name

among the explorers of his generation. He was placed in charge of Fort Chippewyan, on Lake Athabaska, where for eight years he superintended the affairs of the Montreal Company in that district, and it was while so engaged at this post that he planned and successfully carried out two most important expeditions.

The first of these was undertaken in June, 1789. Setting out from the fort in four canoes, he proceeded northward by way of Slave River to Great Slave Lake. With difficulty he forced a passage through the floating ice to the western end of the lake, where he entered a narrow river which to this day bears his name. For a week they were borne along upon its swift current so far beyond the regular trails of the traders that his men, growing alarmed, were reluctant to proceed farther, and the strange tribes of Indians they encountered so magnified the difficulties of the passage farther on towards its end that his already disheartened followers threatened to desert him in a body. Their fears were eventually allayed, a guide was secured, and still northward the party moved. After they had passed Bear River they were again regaled by the natives with more howling tales of fearful demons and dangerous rapids. His guide trembled in terror, but another was obtained, and the strenuous journey was continued. They were soon in the land of the midnight sun, and as their frail craft, before a stiffening breeze, moved swiftly on beyond the limits of familiar vegetation and the haunts of game his attendants, dreading a famine in a wilderness of snow and ice, again rebelled against proceeding any farther. He again prevailed upon them to continue on, and on July 14th, in latitude 69°, he triumphantly

emerged upon an arm of the Arctic Sea. No small accomplishment this for a young man shut up in a distant trading-post hundreds of miles from his nearest white neighbors! Greater still must it appear when we reflect that it was conceived by himself and carried out at his own expense; for his employers cared as little for explorations and discoveries as their great English competitor, unless they saw in them some prospect of increasing the annual supply of furs.

Fort William, or Grand Portage as it was then called, had outstripped all other posts upon the upper lakes, and was at this time the centre of the western trade. It was the terminus of a road leading from a point above the falls on Pigeon River to the north shore of Lake Superior. After the Treaty of Paris, which left Grand Portage in American territory, this post was shifted forty miles northeast to the site of the present city of Fort William (so named after William McGillivray, one of the leading partners of the North-West Company). To-day the original site of Grand Portage is an insignificant Indian village. Thither Mackenzie hurried in the spring, to report his discovery to the directors there assembled according to custom. So engrossed were the Nor'-Westers at this period in their efforts to hold their own against the Hudson's Bay Company that they paid little heed to his report. His next aim was to cross the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean, and he laid his plans accordingly; but, canny Scotchman that he was, he disclosed his purposes to no one until he was ready to start. In the autumn of 1792 he set out for a new post on the Peace River, from which point he continued up-stream a few miles beyond the forks, where he went into winter quar-

ters and collected a goodly supply of furs which, early in the spring, he forwarded to Fort Chippewyan. He built a massive canoe twenty-five feet long, capable of carrying all their supplies and the entire party, composed of himself, seven other white men, and two Indians.

That the Pacific Ocean lay to the west beyond the range of mountains was the sum total of his information. How far distant or how to reach it he knew not; but his plan was to ascend the river as far as he could, cross the Rockies and find another river that would carry him to the sea, taking it for granted that such an one must somewhere be produced by the melting snows. It was as well that his followers did not know the difficulties that lay before them, or few would have volunteered for the journey. For the first few days they made very fair progress against a swift current, but as they ascended farther they were confronted with boiling rapids plunging headlong through deep canyons, hemmed in by perpendicular walls which could be scaled only by clinging to overhanging branches or following a rope stretched from tree to tree. With no surer foothold than such as could be secured by chopping notches in the steep incline, at the risk of dislodging tons of rock, Mackenzie led the way. This means of travel became so hazardous that the river was at length abandoned, and the canoe was carried or dragged across ravines and up the ragged mountainsides for nine miles, where it was again committed to the water. After innumerable obstacles the divide was reached, and the descent began amid dangers greater even than those they had already met. Embarking upon a small stream, they soon learned that it was safer to ascend an unknown river than to follow its current; but

the lesson was acquired at the expense of the wreck of the canoe and the loss of most of their provisions and ammunition. Fearing that this stream—which was none other than the Fraser—would not carry him to the sea, they retraced their steps, to find their progress barred by hostile Indians. A conflict was fortunately avoided through the strategy of the resourceful Scotchman; but his own men, exhausted by trials they had not counted upon, poured their complaints into the ears of their embarrassed leader. By sharing with them the burdens of the journey and being the foremost to face danger in every form, he had succeeded in holding his little band together under circumstances which would have terminated in a revolt but for his inspiring example, and now, when failure seemed imminent and the patience of his faithful followers was well-nigh exhausted, he took them into his confidence and unfolded to them the plan of completing the journey across the mountains on foot, carrying the provisions on their backs. To this arrangement they assented, and on the 4th of July they began the last stage of their memorable voyage. Day after day, each white man weighted down with a hundred-pound burden, they plodded through the forest, scrambled over rocks, and waded waist-deep along marshy ravines. One range was no sooner crossed than another loomed up before them. For two weeks they kept on their course, until at last the mountains were behind them and Indian villages were reached before which were planted the totem-poles of the coast tribes. The natives furnished them with canoes and a guide, and once more they embarked upon a small swift stream—the Bella Coola River. With light hearts they dipped their paddles into

its clear water, for although they were weary and foot-sore, garments tattered, provisions almost exhausted, and a thousand miles lay between them and Fort Chipewyan, they for the time forgot the dangers they had passed, for surely they were nearing the goal they had set out ten weeks before to find. Early on the morning of July 20th the surface of the widening river was enshrouded in a gray mist, which slowly lifted with the rising sun and revealed to the joyous Mackenzie and his delighted companions the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. It is interesting to note that, by a strange coincidence, another celebrated explorer, Captain George Vancouver, was anchored off Point Maskelyne, about one hundred and fifty miles distant, on the same day that Mackenzie reached the mouth of the Bella Coola.

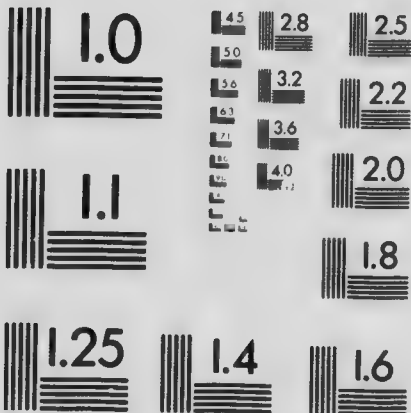
The honor of being the first white man to cross the northern part of the continent to the coast brought to the leader of that expedition such distinction that the company began to realize that in Mackenzie it had a servant of more than ordinary ability, and he was thereafter treated with that respect which the importance of his discoveries could everywhere command, and his opinion was sought upon all matters affecting its general welfare. Some there were, high up in the counsels of the company, who could not see eye to eye with him, or perhaps were jealous of his growing popularity and influence. Among these was Simon McTavish, who was so outspoken in his opposition to Mackenzie that the latter, annoyed with the persistent attacks of his fellow-countryman, severed his connection with his old associates and visited England, where the publication of his travels met with such favor that he returned to Canada in 1801 as

Sir Alexander Mackenzie. No doubt this honor was largely due to the fact that, a few years before, he had acted as travelling companion through the United States and Canada to the Duke of Kent, great-grandfather of His Majesty King George V., and had given eminent satisfaction in that capacity. His well-merited title and his fame as a trader and explorer attracted a number of his old friends and partisans, who prevailed upon him to accept a prominent position in the X Y Co., which had recently embarked in the fur trade. As it was called into being as a protest against the management of the North-West Company, it immediately plunged into active competition in the field of the old company's operations: new posts were opened up in every corner of the North-West wherever a beaver-skin was to be had. But this division of the Canadian trade was short-lived, as the death of McTavish, in 1804, was followed by an amalgamation of the rival concerns. The united energies of these Canadian forces, which retained the title of the North-West Fur Company, were now directed with renewed vigor against their old competitor on Hudson Bay. Especial attention was given to the trade of the Red River district by the building, in 1805, of Fort Gibraltar at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine to supplement the then existing forts at Brandon and Portage la Prairie. Collisions between the representatives of the two companies were a common occurrence, and the machinery for the apprehension and punishment of offenders was so imperfect and cumbersome, notwithstanding the passing of the Canada Jurisdiction Act of 1803, that law and order were set at defiance, might too frequently prevailed over right, and brute force was the



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sole arbiter in many a bitter altercation. In dealing with this interesting period of the history of the North-West we must not overlook the independent traders who, allied to neither of the great companies, played a most important part in its development. The most prominent figure among this class was Alexander Henry, who, in his "Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories," published in 1809, has left us a most complete and reliable account of his experiences. He was an eye-witness of the bloody massacre of the English garrison of Michillimackinac in 1763, and barely escaped with his own life through the timely intervention of a Pawnee slave. During the next twelve years he was prospecting, mining, and trading with the Indians on the north shore of Lake Superior, and, in 1775, with supplies to the value of £3,000, he left the Sault to seek his fortune among the western tribes. He visited the villages of the Crees on Lake Winnipeg, and, following in the footsteps of Vérendrye, who had preceded him by forty years, he halted at Cedar Lake, and, proceeding in a northwesterly direction, reached Cumberland House, which had been built by Hearne the previous year. He wintered at Beaver Lake, and in the early spring he was under way again, and after many weeks of weary travel he arrived at a large village of the Assiniboines, who, after the manner of the savages, lavished their hospitality upon him and invited him to join in an exciting buffalo hunt which he graphically describes in his "Adventures." Returning to his winter quarters on Beaver Lake, he could not resist the temptation to explore the northern regions towards Lake Athabasca, and thither he directed his steps. After travelling about three hun-

dred miles he fell in with a party of Athabasca Indians, from whom he gathered such information of the country beyond that he deemed it unwise to continue farther in that direction, and as they were moving southward he returned with them. Upon reaching Beaver Lake he turned over his remaining supplies to another trader, packed up the stock of furs he had acquired, and returned to Montreal, to learn with surprise that south of the Great Lakes a new republic had sprung up during his absence. Up to 1812 no attempt had been made to settle any portion of that rich area to which emigrants from all nations are flocking to-day. It was no part of the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to introduce settlers except such as were necessary to manage their business, and they even raised strenuous objections to the multiplication of the posts in the interior, alleging, with good reason, that the continued presence of the traders upon the hunting-grounds was an incentive to the Indians to hunt at all seasons of the year. By this indiscriminate slaughter of the game in and out of season an inferior class of furs was obtained during the summer months, and no protection was afforded the beaver during the breeding season. Thus a large percentage of the skins offered for sale were not of a merchantable quality, and many districts capable of producing a large annual supply, if the hunt had been restricted to the winter season, were being depleted and the beaver threatened with extinction.

Although the English company claimed, under the terms of its charter, all of the North-West territory—a claim which they probably would have had difficulty in maintaining in any court of law—yet the Canadian

traders, both before and after the conquest, had done far more to open up the country than the professed proprietors of it. "Why," queried the factors, "should we endanger the lives of our servants and incur the expense of an expedition to the villages of the natives so long as they are content to bring their peltries to our forts?" But the time had arrived when the trade could not be so easily controlled. In order to hold their own there was no course open to the English but to follow the policy of the Canadians, by sending their *voyageurs* into the interior to treat with the Indians and to open up new posts, particularly in the districts of the Red River and the Saskatchewan.

From the time of Champlain to Sir Alexander Mackenzie the settlers upon the St. Lawrence appear to have been fired with the spirit of adventure and an insatiable desire to explore the unknown West. The occupants of the forts on Hudson Bay were for the most part content to confine their operations to the narrow limits of their own stockades, quite unmindful of the fact that "discovery of a new passage into the South Sea" was the main reason assigned for their incorporation. Our enquiry into the work of the explorers of the eighteenth century would be incomplete without a brief reference to a notable exception to the general apathy of the company's servants towards discovery.

Samuel Hearne was an old and trusted employee who seems to have attached little importance to his expeditions to the hunting-grounds upon the Saskatchewan, although it is well known that he thoroughly explored them and was the founder of Cumberland House. The company had for some time been subjected to severe

criticisms for their failure to prosecute the discoveries that were expected of them, and, with unusual liberality, they authorized Governor Norton to dispatch Hearne to investigate the reports of a northern tribe of Indians who declared that they could conduct the English to a rich copper mine on the banks of a great river. Two unsuccessful attempts were made, both expeditions returning after proceeding but a short distance upon the journey. Two lazy and mischievous favorites of the Governor, foisted upon Hearne against his will, spread such discord among his other followers that order and discipline were out of the question, and the first attempt was abandoned. An old Indian chief who volunteered to pilot him upon his third venture gave a characteristic explanation of the cause of their misfortunes upon the second trial, attributing them to the misconduct of the guides and to the plan they adopted at the instance of the Governor in not taking any women with them upon the journey. The necessity of being equipped with a number of the gentler sex was summed up by him as follows:—

“When all the men are heavy-laden they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance; and in case they meet with success in hunting, who is to carry the produce of their labor? Women were made for labor: one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night, and, in fact, there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or any length of time, in this country without their assistance. Women, though they do everything, are maintained at a trifling expense; for as they always act as cooks, the very licking of their fingers, in scarce times, is sufficient for their sub-

sistence." From these casual remarks of the old chief we can readily conceive that the status of woman among these northern tribes was little better than that of a slave. Nature had not endowed her with many charms, and in the selection of a husband she had no voice; and should two or more desire the same one the question of ownership was settled by a wrestling bout, after which the victor carried off the prize. A weak member was fortunate if he secured a wife at all, whereas the strong could indulge in polygamy to his heart's content.

The third expedition left Prince of Wales Fort on the 7th December, 1770, and we may be sure that in deference to the views of the old guide the women were not left behind. For five months, travelling northwest by west, they followed their guide, often suffering from severe cold and want of food, while at other times the expedition was delayed by the prolonged feasting upon the abundant supply of game. Arriving at Lake Clowey, their party was enlarged by a band of warriors from a neighboring tribe, who, despite Hearne's efforts to dissuade them from their evil purpose, conspired with his followers to accompany the expedition with the avowed intention of wreaking vengeance upon the Esquimaux, with whom they had some old score to settle. From Lake Clowey they proceeded due north, and by the first of June they deemed it advisable to leave the women, children and heavy baggage in camp, and thus, in light marching order, they kept on until the end of the month, when, the lakes and rivers being free of ice, they were able to continue the voyage in canoes. They had reached the land of the Copper Indians, who viewed Hearne, the first white man they had ever seen, with great curiosity

and wonderment. After an amusing but critical examination, in which no part of his anatomy was overlooked, they pronounced him a fair specimen of the species, but noted a few regrettable imperfections: the color of his hair "was like the stained hair of a buffalo's tail," and his eyes "like those of a gull," while his white skin "resembled meat which had been sodden in water till all the blood was extracted." On the 14th of July they reached the banks of the Coppermine River, which they followed towards its mouth. Two days later his scouts returned with an announcement which threw the entire camp into a turmoil. They had discovered an Esquimaux camp! Upon receipt of this intelligence, the Indians donned their regalia of war, besmeared their faces with paint and crept silently to the huts of their sleeping victims, for it was after midnight, and before the poor creatures could offer any resistance they slaughtered the entire camp, men, women and children, to the number of more than twenty. Hearne, horrified at this indiscriminate massacre, pleaded for the life of one wretched girl who fell wounded at his feet and clung to him for protection, but her fierce assailants scorned his entreaties and transfixed her to the ground.

Continuing down stream, the mouth of the Coppermine was reached, and before the explorer, the first white man to reach it from the interior, lay the Arctic Ocean. Samples of copper were found, but not in such quantities as he had been led to expect. The scarcity of the metal at that time, according to a then current tradition, was due to the caprice of the discoverer of the mine, who happened to be a female conjurer. Being offended at some indignity offered her by a party who had secured a

large quantity of precious nuggets, she declared that she would be avenged upon them by sitting upon the mine and sinking with it beneath the surface of the earth. Each successive year as they returned they found the mine sinking and the sorceress with it, until finally both were swallowed up and none but a few impure fragments of the once rich deposits were left to mark the spot where once the pure metal lay scattered in profusion. He returned by a circuitous route, spending the greater part of the winter in the country about Lake Athabasca, and reached Fort Prince of Wales in June, 1772. He was not favorably impressed either with the Coppermine district or the tribes who inhabited it, and the company did not consider it to their interest to pursue any farther the exploration of that region.

Up to 1812, when, as we shall presently see, a new policy of colonization was inaugurated, the directors contented themselves with a rigid adherence to the trade policy which had been laid down one hundred and forty years before, venturing into the remote districts only as the exigencies of the traffic demanded the transportation of supplies and the founding of new posts.

CHAPTER VII.

THE dawn of the nineteenth century brought with it little promise of prosperity to the tenantry of the Scottish Highlands, who, since the breaking up of the feudal system, some fifty years before, had remained upon their little holdings with no certainty of their tenure. The estates upon which they and their fathers were born were being gradually alienated to their more thrifty neighbors across the border, and the poor crofters, loath to quit their favorite mountains and glens, dear to them by so many ties, still clung to the unfrequented hillsides, wherever an abandoned hovel would yield a friendly shelter. From these, too, they were soon evicted to provide a game preserve for some mighty lord, and the poor Scots, hungry and homeless, wandered aimlessly in search of a living, subsisting upon what could be gathered from the forest and stream, or was offered them by their more fortunate kinsmen. In their distress hundreds of poor cotters were drawn to the seaside to swell the number of the fisher-folk, where their nets barely preserved them from starvation. Many a tender heart was moved to pity by their wretched condition, but no united effort was made to relieve their suffering.

To no one did the distress of his fellow-countrymen appeal with greater force than to Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, a philanthropic young nobleman, who strenuously advocated emigration to the British

colonies as the only satisfactory solution of the vexed question of caring for the neglected Highlanders. Little thought had Mackenzie that the publication of his travels in the North-West would result in a life-long feud between him and one of his interested readers; but such was the source from which the Scotch earl obtained his first impressions of the rich farm lands of the Red River district. No action was taken by the government, but the determined Earl had taken up the cause in earnest and was not to be thwarted in his plan, which he felt was not only practicable, but would serve a double purpose—the condition of the crofters would be greatly improved and the British possessions would be strengthened by the infusion of British blood.

In 1803 he mustered eight hundred evicted Highlanders and forwarded them to Prince Edward Island, defraying the entire expense from his private purse. The wisdom of this enterprising step is attested to-day by the hundreds of comfortable homesteads of our Island Province, whose proprietors trace their ancestry back to the colonists of Lord Selkirk. Had the young nobleman received the encouragement and assistance which his well-devised plans so richly merited, Britain's colony over the seas would have received the impetus it sorely needed and Scotland would have escaped much of the pauperism following the Napoleonic war. He next proposed a settlement in Upper Canada, but the Provincial Executive did not look with favor upon the proposal, and the suggested emigration to this province dwindled down to the transfer of twenty families from the Island colony, who settled upon a tract of land near Lake St. Clair, which was known as the Baldoon Settlement. To these were

soon added some British subjects from the United States whom he induced to cross the border and take up their residence under their own flag.

As early as 1802 he had conceived the idea of founding a colony in the region about Lake Winnipeg. While in Canada in 1803 he was entertained at the Beaver Club in princely style by the Montreal traders, who little dreamed of the fire they were kindling in the bosom of their honored guest as they graphically described to him the fertile plains of the Great West. The Earl determined to plant a colony there, but he soon realized that there were many obstacles in the way of carrying out his design, and to remove these was no easy task. He was not a man to fold his arms when once he had mapped out a course of action. In vain had he sought the co-operation of the Hudson's Bay Company, which would not entertain his proposals for one moment, as the settlement of the North-West meant the reduction of the fur-producing area. As he saw no hope of inducing the company as then constituted to render him any assistance, he set about to attain the desired end in another way.

France had placed an embargo upon importations from England, which resulted in the tying up of the English fur trade and a consequent drop in the company's shares. Selkirk obtained the best available legal opinion as to the validity of the corporation's title to the Red River territory, and, being assured that it could be upheld, he commissioned his agents to purchase a controlling interest in the declining stock. This aroused a storm of opposition from certain shareholders. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was at the time residing in Scotland, but was still

one of the leading partners of the North-West Company. He felt that this latest move of Selkirk must be checked at any cost; to give him a voice in the proceedings of the English Company, he, with two other associates, purchased £2,500 of stock, but learned to their chagrin, when the vote upon Lord Selkirk's proposition was taken, that they had not been in possession of their shares long enough to entitle them to vote. The critical moment arrived, the question was discussed from every standpoint and the Scotch earl carried the day and became the proprietor of 116,000 square miles of territory, one-half of which lay within the boundaries of the present Province of Manitoba and the other across the present border of the United States.

Matters now assumed a serious aspect for the North-Westerners, who saw in this new colonization scheme the gravest danger which had yet threatened their trade, and Mackenzie declared that he would fire it out to the bitter end.

Captain Miles Macdonell, who had served as a British officer in the Revolutionary War, was chosen as Governor of the new colony, and as fast as he secured colonists Mackenzie's agents followed at his heels and used every species of argument to dissuade them from embarking, and even sent their emissaries on board the ship to entice them to desert. On July 26th, 1811, two of the company's ships sailed from Stornoway with one hundred and five emigrants on board, seventy of whom were for settlement, the others being servants of the company. After an exceptionally rough voyage of sixty-one days, they landed at York Factory, too late in the season to attempt to reach their destination

that year. The fort was on the south shore of Nelson River and had not sufficient accommodation for all the new arrivals, and, even if it had, the company's officials did not relish the idea of having so many undesirable guests quartered upon them during the winter. All hands were set to work and comfortable cabins, known as the "Nelson encampment," were erected on the north shore where the newcomers took up their abode for the winter.

It was not long before the Governor's troubles began. A sprinkling of Irishmen among his Orkney settlers needed only a little strong drink to produce most favorable conditions for a general disturbance upon the slightest provocation. There was the further danger of scurvy, but Macdonell's precautions stamped out the disease before it had made much headway. Before the season passed another difficulty of a more serious nature presented itself in the form of an insurrection headed by a few Orkney men, who had evidently been encouraged by the agents of Mackenzie to resist the authority of the duly-appointed head of the colony. The insurgents were eventually starved into submission and surrendered their arms. Preparations for the voyage inland continued all winter long, and summer was upon them before they were ready to enter upon the last stage of their journey to the promised land. On July 6th, 1812, they embarked in four large, flat-bottomed boats, each with a carrying capacity of three or four tons. At their best they were unwieldy craft, and in unskilled hands they sorely tried the patience of the weary boatmen as they poled them against the stream, dragged them over the rough portages, some thirty in all, or, wading waist deep,

towed them along the shore of a boisterous lake. Day after day they tugged and pushed; time and again they loaded and unloaded the heavy cargoes; for over seven hundred miles, tired and disheartened, they slowly forged their way towards the unknown haven of rest until, worn out with toil, they hauled their boats ashore upon the banks of the Red River, where to-day stands the city of Winnipeg. Macdonell's first care was to select a favorable location for the colony, and he wisely chose that point of land now known as Point Douglas. The first homes built upon the site of the present city of Winnipeg were soon erected at the Colony Gardens, about a mile north of Fort Gibraltar. As provisions were scarce, he concluded that farther up the river the colonists could be better cared for during the winter months. So, at his request, a band of Salteaux Indians conducted them to Pembina, a post of the North-Westerns, some sixty miles distant. This was also the headquarters for a band of half-breeds who congregated about the Canadian company's post to secure such advantages as it might offer and to be near the vast herds of buffalo in the vicinity.

A few weeks later the colony was augmented by another small detachment from Hudson Bay, who assisted the first arrivals in their building operations, and before the severe weather set in accommodation had been provided for the entire party. To the dwellings were soon added a storehouse and quarters for the Governor and his officers. A flagstaff was erected, and as the colors were unfurled to the biting December wind this, the winter quarters of the white settlers, was christened Fort Daer, so named after the minor title of the Scotch earl.

Here they passed their second winter in the new world, living chiefly upon buffalo meat, and in the spring returned to the Forks, where their efforts to cultivate the soil with no better implement than a hoe did not prove very successful. During the summer months they would have perished from starvation but for the wild weeds and roots they gathered from the prairie. Back again in the autumn they trudged with an empty larder. The unhappy strangers, exiled in poverty from their homes in the old world, found themselves face to face with a worse fate in the new. A heavy fall of snow had checked the migration of the buffalo, which usually came in great numbers to their favorite pastures about Pembina, and the settlers, unaccustomed to snowshoes, could not reach them in their distant haunts without danger of perishing in the drifts. The North-Westerners, who at first were disposed to relieve them in their helpless condition, began to show some of the spirit which had aroused Macdonell into action, and the issuing of a proclamation by Macdonell forbidding the exportation of provisions, stirred them into active opposition. Considering the number of settlers then in the district and that were expected to arrive, and the limited amount of available supplies and the assurance Macdonell had received of the legal rights of the Earl, this step was both proper and justifiable, but the North-Westerners, only too glad for a pretext to begin hostilities, boldly resented this usurpation of authority, as they were pleased to style it. Fort Daer was reduced to such straits that the Governor even justified the seizure of a large store of buffalo meat at a neighboring post of the Montreal company. The long

and trying winter was passed and the spring of 1814 found the colonists back again at Point Douglas.

Although the returns from their agricultural operations had been very small, they were assured of the fertility of the soil, and were no longer in doubt as to the possibilities of a harvest when once the prairie was broken up, so with lighter hearts they plunged into their work. In midsummer another band sent out by Lord Selkirk arrived. Both by sea and land their voyage had been one continued series of hardships, but in their veins flowed the blood that yields not to opposition or danger. No sooner had they reached the settlement, exhausted though they were with their tedious journey, than they rolled up their sleeves and set to work with a will to earn some part of the expected harvest.

The annual meeting of the North-Westerners at Fort William was an event looked forward to by all who participated in the proceedings. Thither repaired a number of the wealthy merchants from the East, bringing with them all the luxuries their cellars contained, to meet in annual conference their trading partners of the West, laden with buffalo tongues, beaver tails and all the delicacies the prairie could produce. In the grand council chamber the proud lords from Montreal solemnly discussed the company's affairs with the wintering partners, no less haughty and proud, except when in the presence of the lords ascendant from the East, and mapped out their plans for the succeeding year. These grave proceedings were interspersed with the evening feasts, served in elaborate style in the great banqueting hall, and, as course followed course and the oft-replenished bowl was drained, the rafters rang with shouts of

laughter, and boisterous songs. Far into the night the revels continued. One by one the banqueters reeled away to their compartments, still holding their sides as they chuckled over the last good story, or, too sodden to care where they slept, disappeared under the table humming in maudlin tones the refrain of a favorite song. Without, a host of servants, *courcours de bois*, Indians and *voyageurs* imitated their masters' revels, often concluding in a free fight with fatal results to one or more of the frenzied participants.

At the annual meeting in 1814 it was resolved that some decisive steps must be taken to resist the aggressive acts of the Governor and to leave nothing undone to check the advance of the colony, and two men, well-suited for the undertaking, were commissioned to execute the order. Duncan Cameron and Alexander Macdonell accordingly repaired to the company's post at Fort Gibraltar, less than a mile distant from the offensive settlement. Macdonell then proceeded farther west to enlist the aid of a band of Crees, while Cameron, during his absence, moved freely among the colonists, conversing with them in their native tongue, and sought to wean them from their allegiance to Lord Selkirk. He pointed out to them the folly of remaining in the bleak wilderness, subject to all manner of privations, when comfortable homes awaited them in the older provinces. With bribes and fair promises he ingratiated himself with his fellow-countrymen, a number of whom, at his suggestion, demanded from the acting Governor nine small cannon belonging to the settlement, which he refused to give them, whereupon the rebellious element took them by force. The leader was arrested and con-

fined in the Governor's house, which in turn was besieged by Cameron and the prisoner released. At this juncture the Governor, Miles Macdonell, returned, and Cameron ordered his arrest, but the Governor promptly refused to acknowledge the authority of the representative of the North-West company. In the meantime Alexander Macdonell had returned from his mission to the Crees, but the warriors who accompanied him, puzzled at the conflict of authority, refused to be drawn into the quarrel. To impress upon the natives and halfbreeds that his orders must be respected, Cameron made an attack upon the settlement, and the Governor, not wishing to engage in open warfare, surrendered and was sent to Montreal for trial.

With the head of the colony in close custody, Cameron and Alexander Macdonell, arrayed in cast-off and ill-fitting militia uniforms, attended by a semi-barbarous mob of *Bois-brulés*, now paraded daily before the settlers, assuming all the airs of officers of the King, and coaxed, bribed and frightened them into accepting transportation to Canada. One hundred and forty, out of a total of about two hundred, consented to the terms offered them and, on June 15th, 1815, they took leave of their prairie homes and set out on a voyage longer and more perilous than their trip from York Factory. For twelve long and tiresome weeks they paddled and tramped, besieged by mosquitoes and black flies, and reached their destination in Western Ontario, where they were located in the Township of West Gwillimbury and in the vicinity of London. Alexander Macdonell was left behind to complete the task of clearing out the colony, which he did in a most effective and heartless

manner. Ten days after Cameron's departure each remaining settler was served with a peremptory notice to quit and, unable to resist their cruel persecutors, they gathered their effects upon the river's bank, packed them in canoes, paddled down the river to Lake Winnipeg and crossed to Jack River, where they found shelter at a Hudson's Bay Company post. The North-Westerns completed their fiendish work by reducing to ashes all the buildings of the colony except Fort Douglas, the trading post of their rival. An attack was made upon it, but John McLeod, the resident agent, assisted by three clerks, loaded an old three-pounder to the muzzle with broken chains and deeded the *Bois-brulés*, who, seeing that they were dealing with a man prepared for the emergency, left him in quiet possession of his stronghold and returned to their own quarters at Qu'Appelle. McLeod set to work to replace the destroyed buildings and to preserve the harvest of the settlers, as he confidently believed that Lord Selkirk would find some means to restore the colony.

CHAPTER VIII.

At the very time that Cameron and Macdonell were playing the rôle of despots on the banks of the Red River Lord Selkirk was in Canada seeking from the Government some protection against the danger that he knew was threatening his protégés in the West; but the Nor'-Westers wielded too great an influence in official circles for him to hope for any assistance from that quarter. He sent Colin Robertson, who had been closely allied with him in mustering his first emigrants, with twenty Canadians to Red River, and the first intelligence this officer received of the calamity that had befallen the colony was when he found McLeod clearing away the debris. The loyal remnant that had fled to Jack River was brought back and there soon arrived another detachment from Scotland, in charge of the new Governor of Rupert's Land, Captain Robert Semple. Point Douglas was once more a busy hive, and the Kildonan settlement, as it was shortly afterwards named by its founder, after a parish of that name from which most of the new arrivals had come, gave promise of a brighter future. But the same mischievous pair who had caused the former trouble had returned, Cameron at Fort Gibraltar and Alexander Macdonell at Qu'Appelle, and there were murmurings of another outbreak. Robertson did not propose to wait for an attack, but, at the first sign of unrest, he marched to Fort Gibraltar and arrested

Cameron; but, upon his promising to maintain a peaceful attitude, he gave him his liberty and the winter passed without any attempt to molest the settlers. By the following spring, 1816, Miles Macdonell, who had been released without a trial, had returned in time to welcome Governor Semple upon his official inspection of the post at the Forks.

The colonists, who, like their predecessors, had wintered at Pembina, were back again at the Point, and at no time since the arrival of the first band from York Factory did the settlement wear such an air of contentment. This was the proverbial calm before the storm, for which the clouds were already gathering from every point of the compass. Governor Semple precipitated the attack, which probably would have followed in any event, by again capturing Fort Gibraltar and arresting Duncan Cameron. He counselled the destruction of the fort itself, but in this he was so violently opposed by Robertson, who feared the consequences of such a policy, that the Governor summarily dispatched him to conduct Cameron as a prisoner to Hudson Bay. After their departure the fort was demolished and the material of which it was composed was transported by rafts to Fort Douglas, where it was used in the completion of a new fort which had been begun by McLeod. Fresh fuel was added to the spreading flames of discord and hatred by the capture of Pembina House and the removal of the Nor'-Westers' servants and stores to Fort Douglas. Meanwhile active preparations to wipe out the colony were going on in different quarters. An expedition was starting from Fort William under Norman McLeod; and Alexander Macdonell was mustering the Nor'-Westers at

Qu'Appelle, co-operating with the notorious Cuthbert Grant, the leader of a lawless band of half-breeds. Grant himself was a half-breed in the employ of the North-West Company and had spent several years as an assistant to Mackenzie at Fort Chippewyan. On the 12th of May this reckless desperado attacked Lieutenant Pambrun and a party of Hudson's Bay employees coming down the Qu'Appelle River with supplies and furs for Fort Douglas. The Lieutenant and another factor were made prisoners, the cargoes confiscated and a post up the river destroyed. He continued with his prisoners and booty and, joining forces with Alexander Macdonell, they reached Portage la Prairie, from which point Grant was sent forward with sixty or seventy *Bois-brulés* to attack the colony. Following the Portage Road, an extension of the main street of the present city of Winnipeg, they halted about four miles from Fort Douglas, with the evident intention of passing the colony unobserved to unite with the company, coming in charge of McLeod, which was moving west from Fort William, upon the same mischievous errand, and was at that time about forty miles distant. A lookout at the fort had seen the approach of the strangers and given the alarm to Governor Semple, who went out with twenty men to meet Grant and his rabble crew, who were partially concealed behind a clump of trees. They had proceeded about three-quarters of a mile towards Kildonan, to a small wooded hillock known as Seven Oaks, when Grant and his murderous followers, disguised as savages, advanced from their hiding-place, and, after a short parley, rushed upon the party from the fort, mortally wounded Governor Semple, and with

barbarous cruelty butchered twenty others, and concluded their diabolical work by mutilating the corpses. Out of an entire force of twenty-eight, including some settlers captured before the fray began, twenty-one were killed and one wounded, while the loss to the assailants was one killed and one wounded. Among the number who sallied forth from the fort with Governor Semple was John Pritchard, afterwards secretary to Lord Selkirk, and it is to him we are indebted for full details of this, the blackest page in the history of the North-West Company. He barely escaped with his own life and, while still a prisoner of the *Metis*, whose savage natures were aroused by their recent bloody work, he besought Grant to spare the other colonists, and the only terms upon which the inhuman leader would undertake to check a further massacre were the surrender of the fort and the delivery to him of all the public property. Two days later the panic-stricken survivors marched out of the fort, carrying their few belongings with them, and once more the Kildonan settlement was tenantless save for the wolves snarling over the still unburied bodies of the victims of the massacre. The despairing colonists had not proceeded far towards Lake Winnipeg when they met McLeod and his company of Nor'-Westers. Instead of making a thorough investigation of the wanton murders committed in his cause and showing some sign of humanity towards the homeless and grief-stricken exiles, he assumed the air of a despot and expressed no regret at the atrocities of the *Bois-brûlés*. For several days he delayed the entire party, treating them with incivility and harshness, ransacking their effects and appropriating such papers of Governor Semple, which

they had rescued from the fort, as he thought might serve his own purposes. Before allowing them to re-embark upon their cheerless voyage to Jack River, he arrested five of the most prominent members, including John Pritchard, and sent them away as prisoners to Fort William. He then hurried on to Fort Douglas and assumed command of the united forces. We can understand, and to some extent justify, the feeling of resentment entertained for the settlers by the *Metis*, whose Indian ancestors had for generations claimed the prairies as their hunting grounds. Perhaps we should be more reserved in our strictures upon the hardy bushrangers and their progeny, and throw the mantle of charity over their foibles when we reflect upon their environment and the part performed by them in the conquest of the wilderness. In the *Bois-brulés* still lived some of the spirit of the old chief, Minavavana, who, fifty years before, had boastingly declared to Alexander Henry: "These lakes, these woods and mountains were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance, and we will part with them to none!" They scorned the arrogant claims of the Hudson's Bay Company and, although at first disposed to relieve the wants of the newcomers, they had little respect for them or their occupation. Being themselves Lords of the Chase, they expressed their contempt for the settlers by applying to them the epithets "*Les Jardiniers*," (the gardeners), and "*Les Mangeurs du Lard*," (pork eaters). Encouraged by the North-Westerns in their hostility, they looked upon the affair at Seven Oaks as a righteous act, and felt no remorse for their recent crimes, but, on the contrary, gloried in their so-called victory and regarded the slaughter and expulsion of the colon-

ists an event of such transcendent importance as to call for a celebration extraordinary. Bedecking themselves in their savage toggery, they formed a circle before the fort, and, while the leaders recounted the gruesome details of the recent encounter, they writhed, danced and jumped to the rhythmic time of the deafening tom-toms. Then, shouting the savage war cry, they waved their weapons above their heads and rushed upon the imaginary foe with all the ferocity of a real conflict, until, overcome with exhaustion and excitement, they fell to the ground to be trampled upon by their companions of greater endurance. Among the spectators of this Dance of Victory were McLeod and Macdonell, who, with little regard for their own self-respect, applauded the savage orgy. They believed that the last prestige of the colony had been destroyed and rejoiced. The defeat of Lord Selkirk's plans, albeit the purchase price of their fancied security was their own honor and the blood of their own countrymen.

At Fort William the news was greeted with bumpers to Cuthbert Grant, and the great dining hall rang with praises of the two leaders who had so thoroughly executed the behests of the assembled partners; but they were shortly to be called to account by another Scotchman, to whose ears had come reports of the hostilities of the North-Westerns. Lord Selkirk was in Canada, and, after careful deliberation, determined upon a course of action which showed that his mild and peaceful exterior concealed a courageous heart and that he was capable of warding the thrust and returning the blow of a dangerous enemy. Having appealed again to the authorities for protection of his interests in the North-West and,

receiving no encouragement from that quarter, he hit upon the ingenious expedient of employing a hundred or more of the discharged mercenaries who had been imported to take part in the American war. He engaged them as settlers upon fair and reasonable terms, but had in view their fighting qualities, should the occasion arise for him to use force in asserting his rights and defending his colony against any further attacks. At the head of his warlike contingent, composed principally of members of the De Meuron Regiment, all well-equipped with arms, he arrived at Sault Ste. Marie, where the wisdom of his policy became manifest, for here he learned for the first time the particulars of the Seven Oaks massacre, and changing his course, he headed for Fort William to beard the lion in his den. Arriving before that stronghold with such a show of force he easily obtained the release of Pritchard and the other prisoners, and, as a duly commissioned magistrate, he arrested William McGillivray and the other partners there assembled, sent them east for trial, and took possession of the fort. Upon their arrival at Little York, where Lord Selkirk's warrants were lightly respected, they were promptly admitted to bail. His prisoners being disposed of, he despatched a number of his retinue to Red River, while with the remainder he settled down to spend the winter at the seat of the North-West Company, and in the following May he continued his journey. He arrived at the Forks about the first of July, 1817, and found that the De Meurons had proven themselves worthy of their hire, as they had recaptured Fort Douglas and had brought back the refugees from Jack River. His lordship's amiable disposition and striking personality won for him

the respect of the colonists and the red men, and he immediately began to set his house in order by allotting to each of his newly arrived settlers a tract of land near the fort and framing a treaty with the Indians by which they quitted claim to the Earl of all their interest in the land required for the colonists.

Meanwhile the Home Government had been apprised of the conflict of authority in Canada and recognised the necessity of intervening to prevent further trouble and possible bloodshed. McGillivray and his companions, after their release at Little York, had caused an officer to be despatched to Fort William to arrest Lord Selkirk, but his lordship had no intention of submitting to the arbitrary demands of a biased tribunal a thousand miles away. He arrested the officer commissioned to apprehend him, but gave him his liberty again and sent him about his business. In the West Lord Selkirk's power was supreme, and the presence of his mercenaries contributed towards gaining for him the respect from certain quarters, which but for them would not have been accorded him; yet it has never been established that he was cruel or arbitrary; but it is generally conceded that his influence was exercised for the good of all. In the East his name was a synonym for tyranny and despotism, and the North-Westerners lost no opportunity to vilify him and to stir up their menials to resist his authority. To remedy this state of affairs, the Governor of Canada, upon instructions from England, appointed Colonel Coltman and Major Fletcher a commission to enquire into the recent disturbances and return to the interested parties their respective possessions and generally to take such measures as were necessary to restore

peace and order. They arrived at Fort Douglas while the Earl was busily engaged in reviving the spirits of his discouraged settlers and were surprised to find in him an enthusiastic philanthropist, whose only aim in life was to better the condition of his fellow-countrymen, instead of the flaming fire-brand they had expected to meet. They performed their task with scrupulous care, and their report reflected great credit upon their good judgment and impartiality and was in itself the first important step towards the subsequent union of the two companies and the reconciliation for the first time of all the traders on the St. Lawrence and Hudson Bay.

Once more Kildonan wore a peaceful air, and naught but the memory of their past sufferings marred the contentment of the re-established colony. With words of comfort and good cheer his lordship took leave of the settlers assembled to wish him Godspeed. A far different reception awaited him at Montreal, for, no sooner had he arrived, than he was confronted with a storm of legal proceedings. With just pride we point to our courts of law as the unpolluted fountains from which flows the traditional British Justice, but we hang our heads in shame when we recall the farcical proceedings of 1818, which resulted in the acquittal of the murderers of Governor Semple and the awarding of heavy damages against the Earl of Selkirk. In the face of uncontroverted facts, blind partisanship ran rampant and all hands were raised against his lordship. At no time in the history of Canada was ever a single individual subjected to such an unjust and bitter persecution. Public opinion became so intense and perverted during the trials at Little York that even representatives of the

Protestant clergy did not refrain from joining in the general outcry, until the disconsolate Earl was hounded from our shores and, broken down in health, retired to the South of France, where he died in 1820.

The visit of Lord Selkirk to Red River, the work of the commission and the presence of the De Meurons all tended to secure the colony from further attacks, but at some of the remoter posts there were still frequent collisions between the agents of the two companies. The Kildonans betook themselves to breaking up the land and improving their homes, but they were still unable to raise enough foodstuff to tide them over the winter, and in the late autumn of 1817 they again migrated to Pembina.

In July of the following year there was a visitation of locusts, which came in great clouds, eclipsing the light of the sun for miles. The grain was in the ear and the settlers were hopeful of a bountiful harvest, but in a few hours every vestige of green was consumed. In the following year these pests again appeared, and the discouraged colonists would have perished from starvation had not the Hudson's Bay Company brought in a supply of provisions. The reports of these repeated disasters must have fallen heavily upon the heartbroken Earl in his quiet retreat. To secure seed grain for the spring of 1820 was the next problem, as the nearest supply was across the border, five hundred miles distant. A number of young Highlanders volunteered for the journey, which proved a difficult and burdensome one, but the grain was obtained and a late crop yielded them little more than was required for seed for the following season.

The year 1821 was an eventful one for the little col-

ony, and, indeed, for the great North-West. We reserve its consideration for another chapter. The most confirmed optimists would hardly have ventured an opinion that Lord Selkirk's scheme would prove successful; we know from subsequent events that he was far in advance of his age, and of the great North-West he alone appears to have had an intuitive conception of its "illimitable possibilities," as Lord Beaconsfield expressed it. It seems to have been decreed by fate that the pioneer settlement of the prairies was not to escape some of the trials of the older provinces and, like them, was doomed to receive its baptism of blood. How much longer the colonists could have held out against misfortunes such as they had already passed through, it would be difficult to conjecture. The De Meurons had served the purpose for which they were originally enlisted, but they were ill adapted to their new surroundings and, while they would have proved a source of protection in the event of another raid, such as the colony had been subjected to before their arrival, yet they were a constant source of worry to the other settlers. They were lazy and quarrelsome, and, as professional soldiers, had acquired habits that a rigid military discipline might have held in check, but which the freedom of a life on the plains only intensified. There was little in common between them and the rest of the colony except a general feeling of restlessness, and if 1821 had not brought with it the hopeful beginning of a brighter era, we feel safe in assuming that Kildonan would have been abandoned and the infant colony strangled at its birth.

CHAPTER IX.

The bloodshed at Red River had a depressing effect upon the trade of both companies; dividends were gradually shrinking and both were afraid of being wiped out altogether. The North-Westers' term of partnership was drawing near its close, and there was such dissension among the ranks that an agreement for an extension was very improbable. A parliamentary committee was probing into the cause of the recent troubles and the alleged miscarriage of justice in the colony, and the Hudson's Bay Company was trembling through fear that its charter would be annulled or its privileges materially curtailed. The time was ripe for such an arrangement as would remove the cause of the differences and the death within a few weeks of Lork Selkirk and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the two leading figures in the late unfortunate disturbances, rendered more practicable the negotiations already on foot for a peaceful settlement. To the Honorable Edward Ellice, an English partner in the North-West Company, is due the credit of having effected a happy union of the hostile forces. The hundred shares of the new company were equitably distributed among the resident traders and factors in Canada and the English partners. The abuses that had crept into the trade through competition were immediately removed, the traffic in liquor was suppressed, hunting out of season was discouraged and the neglected posts placed

upon a better footing, with the result that the trade immediately revived and dividends rose as high as twenty per cent. Although the future had yet some bitter trials in store for the colonists, they now for the first time felt secure from the worst of all evils, the cruel attacks of their own kindred. Man can endure with resignation and patience the visitations of Providence, but a blow from the hand of a brother leaves a sting that time cannot efface. The colony at this time contained about five hundred souls of different nationalities, amongst whom various disputes had arisen, and to adjust these differences the newly organized company sent out two representatives, one of whom was Nicholas Garrioch, who, by his tact and courtesy, succeeded in reducing much of the prevailing friction. His name will always be associated with the fortifications at The Forks, which he rearranged in 1822 by setting apart Fort Douglas as a colony fort and building a wooden one as the headquarters of the company, to which was given the name of its popular founder.

Lord Selkirk's executors, in the administration of his estate, were not unmindful of the cause that had been so dear to the heart of their testator, and continued to send out more colonists and to keep a watchful eye upon their welfare. The colony, although free from the serious dangers that had threatened its extinction before the formation of the new company, was not exempt from many lesser evils that now retarded its progress. Under Governor Macdonell, who, by a system of fraudulent entries and burdensome imposts provided the wherewithall for a riotous life, there were launched a number of "get-rich-quick" companies, doomed to failure from

the beginning. In the expectation of enormous profits, wages were advanced and money was freely spent and the inevitable collapse was followed by bankruptcy and misery. At this early period in the history of the settlement the religious question, which for generations after divided the settlers into opposing factions, took on a serious aspect and resulted in the formation of the two parties, the Scottish and the French.

In spite of these drawbacks the colony grew and enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, but it was overtaken in the winter of 1826-7 by a disaster so overwhelmingly destructive that we marvel that it ever recovered from the effects. Early in the autumn of 1826 the settlement was overrun by an army of mice, which appeared everywhere in such countless numbers that their origin was a mystery. They seemed to spring out of the ground on every side and devoured everything before them, even the stubble in the fields, and left the famine-stricken colonists with empty granaries to face the severest winter they had yet experienced. Fierce blizzards swept over the desolate prairies and the colony was deluged with such mountains of snow that the trails became impassable, and any settlers wandering from their homes in search of food ran the risk of being lost in a blinding snowstorm, with the thermometer sometimes 45° below zero. Some floundered through the drifts in their vain attempts to reach Pembina, and their stiffened corpses were found upon the plains, where a death more merciful than starvation had overtaken them. The few who did reach Pembina found that the buffalo had fled to distant fields, where no hunter could follow them. One party stumbled upon an object a quarter of a mile from the

village, and, clearing away the snow, they discovered the emaciated body of a poor mother with her baby wrapped in the folds of her scanty garments. To save that precious burden she had travelled one hundred and twenty-five miles, and the drawn features of that upturned face depicted the despair and agony which even death could not conceal of that devoted heart as she sank exhausted within sight of the expected succor. No less than thirty-three lives were lost from hunger and exposure, and many of those who survived, after devouring their dogs and horses, and even scraps of leather, went mad with delirium. With the opening of spring communications were re-established, and as relief came to the starving settlers they hoped that they had seen the last of their afflictions, but that vain hope was soon to be dashed to the ground. With truth they might have exclaimed:

“One woe doth tread upon another’s heel,
So fast they follow.”

The ice in the Red River had frozen to a depth of five or six feet, and long before this barrier was removed the melting snow, which had covered the plains to the south, came pouring in from the tributaries with an unprecedented fury. Slowly at first the waters rose, rushing on towards The Forks, bearing upon their surface huge blocks of ice, which were piled high above the ordinary level until from bank to bank a massive dam was reared; then, overflowing their banks, came like a tidal wave towards the panic-stricken colony. The Governor sought refuge in the upper storey of his resi-

dence, which was submerged to a depth of ten feet. The greatest confusion prevailed as the terrified settlers fled from their homes, dragging their effects with them to the nearest elevation, from which perhaps they were again driven as the rising flood crept higher and higher. For seventeen days the deluge continued, and as the ice gave way in places the water rushed out as through a mill-race, carrying all before it until scarcely a building was left upon its foundation; but houses and barns were drifting hither and thither, with howling dogs and frightened cats perched upon their roofs. On towards Lake Winnipeg moved the debris of hundreds of homes, while the despairing owners, shivering upon some rocky eminence, looked out over the surface of a great lake extending as far as the eye could reach. June was well advanced before the flood subsided, and the settlers were able to return to the site of the colony, for little more remained than the land itself.

The De Meurons at no time had proven themselves desirable neighbors, and, at this trying crisis in the history of the settlement, they made themselves particularly offensive by pilfering the live stock of the other colonists, which they slaughtered and sold again to the original owners at famine prices. The colony endured their insolence and oppression for a time, but there was a limit to the Scotchmen's patience and low murmurings of reprisal reached the ears of the predatory and insolent mercenaries, who exercised their discretion rather than display their valor by migrating to the United States, taking with them their Swiss wives and neighbors who had been introduced into the colony a few years before to provide housekeepers for the bachelors. The

departure of this undesirable element was such an occasion for rejoicing among the remaining colonists that they gladly contributed towards the furnishing of supplies for the voyage and were more resigned to their recent disasters, which were productive of at least one beneficial result.

With a courage that the very air of the West appears to foster in the breasts of all its frontiersmen, the Scotchmen set to work to sow and reap, to build and expand and to lay sure and firm the foundations of a community destined in time to become a great and populous city. The French-Canadians from Pembina took up homes on the Red River at St. Boniface and the half-breeds moved to White-Horse Plains, farther up the Assiniboine. New settlers from the outlying posts joined their fellow-countrymen at Kildonan, and in three years' time over two hundred new houses had been built and the Red River colony, now boasting a population of 1,500 souls, took on a new life. The one thing needful to mould the character and guide the destinies of the youthful colony was a strong and energetic leader, and such a guardian was at hand in the person of George Simpson, the Governor-in-chief of the Hudson's Bay Company. He was still in the prime of life, had travelled extensively and acquired the happy faculty of winning his way to the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men, and for forty years he moved from post to post, ever mindful of the interests of the great company he served yet ever ready to lend a willing ear to the grievances of his lowest subordinate, and many an outbreak was averted and old wounds healed through his timely mediation. Although there was a local governor at Fort Garry, it was to Governor Simpson that

the delicate questions were referred, and his pleasant manner and good judgment rarely failed to effect a satisfactory solution. He also won the respect and confidence of the Indians, who regarded him as the oracle, whose word could always be relied upon and whose judgment was infallible. He extolled the attractions of Rupert's Land and was the first governor to truthfully report the great possibilities of the rich prairie lands, although in later years, when the issue lay between the spreading colonies and the fur-trade, he espoused the cause of the great monopoly.

He paid an annual visit to the colony, which was an object of his especial care, and during his stay was besieged with complaints of every nature. He patiently listened to all who sought advice, and used his best endeavors to smooth over the differences that were continually cropping up. By this means he was brought near to the people and could not fail to realize the necessity for some other form of government, and that the affairs of the growing colony could not be satisfactorily administered by the resident Governor. Between the French and Scotch parties there were frequent clashes, insignificant in themselves, but which threatened to be attended with serious consequences. The French party were hunters, whose harvests of furs were uncertain, and the Scotch farmers had their fat and lean years as well. A scant year with one created a demand for the produce of the other, and a bountiful season for both, instead of producing general prosperity, gave to them very meagre returns for their labor. Thus, while each was dependent in a measure upon the other, there was no community of interest or common bond of sympathy to draw them

together. To devise a form of government for a colony composed of two such discordant elements was the self-imposed task which Governor Simpson undertook to perform. It is easy at this distant date to criticize the system he adopted, but to his astute mind it appeared to be the best solution; and, when we consider the diverse interests he had to serve, his critics might experience some difficulty in suggesting a substitute that would not be open to objections just as serious. The Council of Assiniboia, as this, the first government of the great North-West, was styled, consisted of Governor Simpson, the Local Governor, the Roman Catholic Bishop, two Church of England clergymen, and ten others, made up principally of officers and retired officials of the Hudson's Bay Company. That there were but two representatives of the French party, who composed nearly one-half the entire population, has been the subject of many adverse comments, but it must be borne in mind that the appointment of this Council followed immediately after an uprising of the *Metis* in 1834, and to place any considerable power in the hands of a race that had already displayed a tendency to revolt upon the slightest provocation would have been a most dangerous experiment. The Hudson's Bay Company influence predominated in the Council, and it was quite natural that it should, as the company had, but a few months before, purchased the entire interest of the Selkirk estate in Rupert's Land and was again the proprietor of the territory over which the new governing body exercised its jurisdiction. It has been urged that the Council as constituted was a mistake, because it failed to preserve order, but such outbreaks are not traceable alone

to that particular form of government, as rebellions have since occurred in the same territory under representative government. The Hudson's Bay Company was a trading concern, not a colonization agency, and its chief end was to secure handsome dividends for its shareholders, and the Governor, so far as he personally was responsible for the creation of the Council, for it must not be forgotten that he had the London Board of Directors to reckon with, displayed unusual skill and ability as the representative of the company and showed a generous consideration for the feelings of the colonists. No legislative body, however constituted, could preserve the chartered rights of the company and at the same time minister to the ever-increasing needs of the growing colony. It also would have taxed the ingenuity of the shrewdest statesman to reconcile the two parties on the banks of the Red River. The fault lay not with the Governor-in-chief, nor his Council, but in the attempt to engraft upon the people of the plains, at a most un-auspicious time, when the spirit of freedom and independence was everywhere asserting itself, the feudal system of the old world, a system calculated to breed discontent at any time, and never were conditions more unsuited for its maintenance than in the Red River colony.

Albeit the French and Scotch were not a happy combination and the Council was not wholly acceptable to either party, the colony continued to progress. The experimental stage was passed. Rumors of the fertile plains lying between the great lakes and the Rocky Mountains reached the poor tenantry of the old country. With wondering eyes they beheld the samples of wheat grown upon the prairies, which up to that time had been

regarded as a vast wilderness, suited only for grazing grounds for the wandering herds of buffalo. In the older provinces they gathered about the firesides to listen to the tales of some returning pilgrim who had visited this land of promise. From the North, East and South the settlers came pouring in, and from the nucleus at Fort Garry the nation-building began, and little clusters of houses sprang up, here and there, on the distant prairies, wherever a favorable location attracted the ever-increasing stream of immigrants.

CHAPTER X.

IN 1839 the first judicial tribunal was created and Adam Thom, a hard-headed Scotch lawyer from Montreal, was appointed Recorder, a position he continued to fill for ten years. His deliverances, if not at all times models of logical reasoning, possessed the merit of being free from ambiguity, being often expressed in language of no uncertain sound, and the fact that he was unpopular with both the Scotch and French leads to the conclusion that as between them his judgments were righteous. There was a suspicion, ill-founded perhaps, that when the interests of the company were at stake the scales of justice leaned towards the paymasters of the princely salary of the Recorder. From the very first the French and half-breeds were not disposed to regard his appointment with favor, owing to his having taken an uncompromising stand against the French-Canadians in the Papineau rebellion, and the prestige of Governor Simpson suffered considerably from the same cause. The strong arm of the law, as represented in Mr. Thom, for a time overawed the restless half-breeds, but it was not long before even his grave countenance and stern demeanor failed to silence their grumblings. They fiercely resented the curtailment of their privileges and challenged the right of the company to expropriate lands which their ancestors had claimed from time immemorial; and threats of rebellion filled the air.

Fort Garry in the meantime had been rebuilt, and in 1846 an armed force consisting of a detachment of the Sixth Regiment of Foot, numbering, together with a branch of the artillery and engineers, 500 men, under the command of Colonel Crofton, the newly appointed Local Governor, took possession of the new fortifications. All outward signs of resistance effectually disappeared before this show of force, but the cause of disaffection was not removed, and the smouldering flames of rebellion were merely subdued for the time, to burst forth afresh, with greater violence, as soon as the restraining pressure was removed. The troops were withdrawn in 1848, and in the following year the *Metis*, under the leadership of Louis Riel, father of the famous rebel of the same name, offered the first armed resistance to the authority of the Recorder. One of their number was charged with trading in furs with an Indian, and upon the day fixed for his trial Riel harangued 500 of his compatriots and led them to the door of the court house to enforce their demands. The judge took his seat upon the bench, but there was no response to the crier's call for the prisoner, who was held by the angry mob without. The court relaxed somewhat from the customary dignity of its proceedings by despatching a messenger to the defiant half-breeds, requesting them to send a representative to the court to confer with the authorities. Twenty armed *Metis* conducted the prisoner before the tribunal, where the accused trader, in the course of an informal discussion, admitted the offence, but refused to submit himself to the jurisdiction of the court and was again borne triumphantly away amid the shouts and jeers of his excited friends, who tauntingly defied the officials

and challenged them to arrest the defendant. The court, regardless of the form of procedure, recorded a verdict of guilty, but dared not attempt to enforce its own decree. Adam Thom's judicial career was ended, and from that day the Hudson's Bay Company realized that the 5,000 colonists of the Red River Settlement could no longer be cajoled or bullied into obedience to regulations that interfered with their freedom. The Recorder's Court continued as the official means of administering the laws of the Council, but Mr. Thom no longer presided, and it was not an unusual occurrence for the settlers, emboldened by their success in dethroning the first Recorder, to rescue their friends from the officers of the law when they had reason to believe that their rights were being invaded or disregarded. Every new arrival in the colony, wondering at the absence of some form of representative government, added to the fast rising tide of opposition to the rule of the Company, but joined with the more law-abiding class in counselling peaceful measures.

By 1857 the colony had assumed such dimensions and the discontent was so general that none saw more clearly than the company that the time for a change was fast approaching. In an age of representative governments it could hardly be expected that any settlement composed of British subjects would humbly submit to the imposition of taxes and the enactment and enforcement of laws by a body of men in whose appointment they had no voice. The whole question was investigated by a select committee of the Imperial House, and only the casting vote of the chairman defeated a resolution proposed by Mr. Gladstone that the company be deprived

of its privileges. In the end a compromise report was agreed upon, recommending that the Red River and Saskatchewan districts be ceded to Canada on equitable principles, but that the company should retain its monopoly in the fur trade. In the Canadian Parliament the subject was warmly discussed, but no definite course of action was adopted. For nearly two hundred years the company had succeeded in retaining unimpaired all the extensive grants and privileges of its original charter, which had more than once been confirmed by royal patent, often challenged, but at no time had there been a judicial pronouncement upon its validity. Whatever may have been the views of former Parliaments, it required no prophet to foresee that the petition of the colonists, praying for a termination of the company's rule, must in the end prevail, and that some policy must be adopted calculated to open up the country and to promote colonization. To forestall the action of Parliament, which they feared might be attended with serious consequences, the company made one final effort to solve the difficulty. With the aid of a strong financial association, the company was reorganized upon a basis making especial provision for the development of agriculture, the introduction of settlers and the improvement of their condition; but it was too late to frame a policy to suit the more outspoken leaders of the disaffected colonists, whose opposition had, through years of strife, deepened into a hatred, and nothing short of absolute freedom would be accepted. The longer the fight continued the more bitterly did the malcontents denounce the administration and insist upon complete emancipation from the rule of the oppressive monopoly. In 1859 two enter-

prising Englishman supplied another mouthpiece for the complaints against company despotism by publishing a pretentious little sheet, the "Nor'-Wester," the pioneer of the press of Western Canada. By 1864 it was evident to everyone that not only must some new form of government be devised, but also that the company could no longer hold the vast territory over which it had claimed exclusive jurisdiction for nearly two hundred years.

The Honorable William McDougall, Minister of Crown Lands, was the first Canadian statesman to lay claim to all the North-West territory that could be proven to have been in possession of the French at the time of the cession of Canada to the British. His contention appears to be most sound, as the grant from King Charles was not of all the lands described in the charter, but only such portions of them as were "not already actually possessed by or granted to any of our subjects or possessed by the subjects of any other Christian prince or state." At the time the patent was issued the French were trading in the North-West, and continued to do so until the British conquest, and it is quite apparent that the saving clause quoted above was inserted with the view of respecting and preserving their rights. In 1864, mainly through his influence, the question of purchasing outright the interest of the company in all the lands included in their charter again became the subject of discussion in both the Colonial and Home Parliaments. The *Metis*, in clamoring for a change, had been so engrossed in their attacks upon the company and the Council that they had relaxed somewhat in their antagonism to the other colonists, but now, when all signs pointed towards handing over the territory to the Canadian Government,

the cleavage between the two parties became greater than ever.

The confederation of the provinces in 1867 anticipated the admission of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territories into union with Canada, and in December of the same year Mr. McDougall introduced in the Canadian Parliament a series of resolutions, urging the expediency of petitioning Her Majesty to effect the union and to grant to Canada the authority to legislate for their future welfare and good government. It was at this stage of the negotiations that there arose among the French element, according to Archbishop Taché, "a nervousness and uneasiness about the future." They had entertained aspirations of becoming an independent colony, and the proposal that they should be turned over to the tender mercies of the Canadian Government aroused the indignation of a few hot-headed enthusiasts, who easily acquired a considerable following by magnifying the consequences of such a step and emphasizing in particular the loss of all control over their language, their religion and their schools. The Imperial Parliament, by the "Rupert's Land Act, 1868," prepared the way for negotiations for the surrender of the lands of the company. In 1869 the negotiations were resumed, and the terms of purchase arranged, whereby, in consideration of £300,000 and subject to certain reservations, including all established posts and every twentieth section in the fertile belt, some 2,300,000 square miles of territory were to pass to Canada. In June of the same year the Canadian Parliament prepared for the reception of the territories by passing "An Act for the temporary government of Rupert's Land and the North-

Western Territory when united with Canada," the provisions of which proved very distasteful to a large proportion of the colonists. The Governor, with the advice of the Privy Council, was authorized to appoint a Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, and "to make provision for the administration of justice therein, and generally to make, ordain and establish all such laws, institutions and ordinances as may be necessary for the peace, order and good government of Her Majesty's subjects and others therein." It also provided for the appointment of a Council to aid the Lieutenant-Governor in the administration of the affairs of the territory. No provision whatever was made for representative government, and the country was still to be ruled by a Council, the only difference being that the new government was appointed by the Dominion authorities instead of by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Before the deed of surrender was actually signed the Canadian Government sent out a staff of surveyors under Mr. Snow to lay out the country into townships. As the new lines run by Mr. Snow did not coincide with the old ones, by which the settlers' lots had been laid out, and a great deal of confusion was likely to result from the change, the ringleaders of the opposition seized upon this circumstance as a further ground for resisting the authority of the Canadian representatives. Mr. McDougall was appointed Lieutenant-Governor and set out for the North-West, with a retinue of officials and servants, to be on hand to take over from the resident Governor of the Company the reins of power, as soon as the Queen's proclamation should issue declaring the territory a part of the Dominion of Canada. It is true the

colonists had petitioned for the aid and protection of the Canadian Government, and if a more politic method of granting that prayer had been adopted they probably would have consented to be ruled for a time at least from Ottawa, but the mistake, if such it was, consisted of sending to the colony a government "all ready made" without in any way conferring with them as to what form would be most acceptable to them. Had they been consulted, great difficulty would probably have been experienced in settling upon a plan wholly agreeable to all parties, as the half-breeds had shown no disposition to treat with the English-speaking colonists upon even terms; but the gravity of the situation was not fully realized, or an attempt at a compromise would have been made, and if happily effected a most dangerous crisis would have been safely passed. All classes were unanimous in their determination to be rid of the company's Council, but do not appear to have even entered into an intelligent discussion as to what was to take its place. The great mass followed a few hot-headed leaders, who, in their denunciation of the administration of the affairs of the colony by the company, indulged in most extravagant language and won a local reputation for power and influence that gave them a mastery over their admiring followers. Chief among these agitators was Louis Riel, a well-educated man, shrewd and cunning in devising plans, but too frequently lacking the courage to carry them out. The chief lieutenants of the rebel leader were W. B. O'Donoghue, a mischief-making Irishman, steeped to his eyes in Fenianism, and a French-Canadian, A. Lapine, ready at all times to execute the traitorous behests of his fellow-conspirators: a dangerous trio to lead

the restless half-breeds. Governor McDougall, who had hoped to be acclaimed the liberator of the great North-West, found his progress blocked at Pembina by the rebel leader at the head of three or four hundred men, and was forced to make an ignominious retreat across the border. A proclamation was issued by this self-constituted dictator, who professed to represent only the French-speaking population, inviting the English-speaking colonists to send twelve representatives to a conference "to consider the present state of this country and to adopt such measures as may be deemed best for the future welfare of the same." Fort Garry was seized, a garrison of half-breeds installed, a provisional government formed with John Bruce, a plastic figure-head, as president and Riel secretary, and over the fort was raised the new rebel flag. In the rear of the dwelling of Dr. Schultz, who had taken a firm stand against the rebels, was a building temporarily used for storing the supplies of the Snow survey party. When the half-breeds began to gather in a threatening manner at Fort Garry, Colonel Dennis, a representative of the Dominion Government, sent out to adjust the trouble over the new survey, directed that every precaution should be taken to safeguard their supplies. Accordingly fifty or sixty Canadians, indifferently armed, gathered at the Schultz residence for that purpose, with the result that the whole party, including the Schultz family, were placed under arrest. This meeting for the purpose of guarding the stores has been characterized as the "Schultz blunder," but as no force was used or even threatened, and the only object in view was to protect property in which the half-breeds had no interest, we fail to see wherein was

the blunder or what justification can be pleaded for the wholesale arrest of law-abiding men and unoffending women. The local governor of the company endeavored to check the insurrection by issuing a counter-proclamation, but, as he admittedly had received no official notification of the transfer of the territory to Canada, his empty threats merely strengthened the hands of Riel, who next appeared in the role of President. This was the position of affairs in December, 1869, and upon the determination of the issue rested in no small measure the fate of the Dominion of Canada. Secret agencies were at work urging annexation to the United States, which, if carried into effect, would have forever precluded the possibility of a confederation from ocean to ocean. The hand of the Evil One manifested itself in a proclamation of resistance issued by "President" Bruce, the concluding words of which were copied verbatim from the Declaration of Independence. To evolve order out of this dangerous chaos was a task before which the strongest might well hesitate.

The Ottawa Government had not anticipated such a crisis, and Sir John A. Macdonald wisely accepted the proffered assistance of the newly appointed Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was none other than Donald A. Smith, the present Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal. He was appointed special commissioner and so broad was the scope of his authority that he was not only directed to enquire into the cause of the obstruction to Governor McDougall, but was empowered "to explain to the inhabitants of the said country the principles upon which the Government of Canada intends to administer the government of the country . . . and

to take steps to remove any misapprehensions which may exist in respect to the mode of government of the same, and to report to our Governor-General the result of such enquiries and on the best mode of quieting and removing such discontent and dissatisfaction." He was also asked to report upon the most proper mode of effecting a speedy transfer of the territory to Canada and the most advisable method of dealing with the Indians. To no single individual was ever assigned in the history of Canada a more delicate or important mission.

Accompanied by his brother-in-law, Richard Hardisty, Mr. Smith left Ottawa on December 13th and arrived at Pembina on Christmas eve. Leaving his credentials for the time with Mr. Provencher, the secretary of Governor McDougall, the commissioner hurried fearlessly on and presented himself at the gates of Fort Garry, and, upon stating his business, was ushered into the presence of "President" Riel, who introduced him to the provisional government. He was requested to take an oath that he would not attempt to leave the fort that night, nor to upset the government that had been established, and, as he promptly refused, he was placed under arrest and given to understand that from that hour he was to consider himself a prisoner, but this by no means interfered with his plans, and he immediately set to work with a shrewdness and determination characteristic of the man. An outdoor meeting of all the inhabitants was convened for January 19th. At the appointed time, with the thermometer twenty degrees below zero, the shivering settlers for five hours listened to the contending parties, and, despite the efforts of Riel and his fellow-conspirators, the representative of the Canadian Government held the

rebels in check and made it clear to the majority of the large assembly that the Imperial Government had "no intention of acting otherwise or permitting others to act otherwise than in perfect good faith towards the inhabitants of the Red River district of the North-West." Bloodshed was narrowly averted when, upon the adjournment of the meeting until the morrow, the release of the prisoners was demanded. The "President," who was in no humor for so complete a surrender of his fast-ebbing power, called his men to arms, and for the moment a conflict seemed inevitable, but fortunately wiser counsels prevailed and the meeting dispersed without an attempt at a rescue. At the adjourned meeting it was agreed that, on the following Tuesday, twenty representatives of the French population should meet a like number appointed by the English to discuss Mr. Smith's commission and the general welfare of the country. This convention, after many stormy meetings, finally agreed upon a "List of Rights" setting forth the conditions on which the colony was prepared to enter the Canadian Confederation, and three delegates were elected to present it to the Dominion Government. On the 10th of February, 1870, the labors of the convention were concluded, but not until Riel had prevailed upon a majority to nominate a "provisional government" with himself at its head.

Since his arrival at Fort Garry, though not closely confined, Mr. Smith had remained a prisoner, and it was not until eight days after the convention had disbanded that he was given permission to return to Ottawa. During all this time he had been in close touch with all that had taken place and had met with coolness and prudence

the fiery outbursts of the irascible rebel chief. The object of his mission had been accomplished and the settlers were satisfied that their grievances would be heard by the Canadian Government, with which they were brought into direct communication, and that there was no intention on the part of Canada of trifling with their rights. Before his departure for the East he was doomed to witness one of the bloodiest crimes ever perpetrated in our country in the name of justice. After the nomination of the "Provisional Government," which was not intended to exercise the functions of an executive council further than to act as a committee of the colonists, to assist in the transfer of the country to Canada, and to safeguard the interests of the colony in the meantime, Riel had given his word that all the prisoners would be released. This promise he had failed to carry out, and on the 14th and 15th of February about eighty residents at the Portage marched, as an unorganized body, to Kildonan, where they were joined by three or four hundred more colonists, principally English half-breeds. The object of this uprising was to demand and secure the release of the prisoners still held in custody, but as the movement was discountenanced by the majority of English and Scotch settlers, they abandoned their purpose and were returning to their respective homes, when forty-seven of their number were arrested. No attempt has been made to defend this treacherous act. He admitted his error by setting the other prisoners free upon hearing of the approach of their would-be rescuers. Among the number falling into the hands of the usurper Riel was Captain Boulton, who was tried by court-martial on the 17th and sentenced to be shot on the

following day. Through the intercession of Mr. Smith his life was spared. Two weeks later, without any intimation in the meantime as to any further intended executions, the commissioner was thunderstruck upon being informed by the Rev. George Young, a Methodist clergyman, that Thomas Scott, another prisoner, whose conduct it was alleged had been offensive to the "President," had been summarily tried by court-martial and was to be shot in an hour's time. This farcical proceeding, in which the life of the accused was at stake, was conducted in the French language, of which Scott had little or no knowledge. He was allowed no counsel nor opportunity to present a defence, and was not even aware of the serious nature of the charge preferred against him. As Mr. Smith stated in his report to the Secretary of State, the thing appeared "too monstrous to be possible," and the reverend gentleman was "paralyzed with horror." When calling upon Riel he was informed that the sentence was irrevocable and would not be postponed one minute beyond the appointed time. Every possible influence was brought to bear upon the tyrant, but he was immovable, and, under the pretext that this murderous act would command the respect of Canada for the colonists, the victim was led outside the gate of the fort and, while he knelt in the snow in prayer, beside a coffin prepared for the reception of his body, the firing squad levelled their guns and executed the mandate of their heartless master.

Following the report of Mr. Smith and upon the presentation of the "List of Rights" by the delegates appointed for that purpose, the Dominion Parliament, anticipating the order of Her Majesty-in-Council admitting

Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory into the Union, passed in May, 1870, an Act whereby the Red River settlements became an integral part of the confederation and the colony planted by Lord Selkirk fifty-eight years before blossomed forth as the Province of Manitoba, with an estimated population of seventeen thousand souls. Ample provision from the Dominion treasury was made for the cost of government, and the rights of the half-breeds and other settlers were recognized and suitably provided for. Treaties were afterwards made with the Indians for the extinguishment of their titles, and they were taken under the wing of the paternal Government at Ottawa, which left nothing undone which could be foreseen at the time to give the youngest member of the Dominion a fair start as an independent province. Upon the recommendation of the commissioner that a strong military force should be sent to the North-West, Colonel Garnet Wolseley, with his famous Red River Brigade, was despatched from Toronto on May 25th. The entire command numbered over 1,400 men, composed of 400 regulars, 750 volunteers from the drilled regiments of Ontario and Quebec, 274 *voyageurs* and 14 guides. The distance to be covered was 1,280 miles, and the many vexatious delays emphasized the necessity for an all-Canadian railway to our newly acquired possessions. The first stages from Toronto to Collingwood by rail and thence by steamer to Sault Ste. Marie were easily accomplished, but the gates of the canal were closed, not only to the "contraband of war," but to the vessels chartered to convey the troops and stores to Prince Arthur's Landing. This obnoxious restriction, which was subsequently withdrawn through

the intervention of Her Majesty's Minister at Washington, rejoiced the hearts of the blatant Fenian rabble across the river, who threatened a raid upon the stores which were being hauled overland above the rapids, but fortunately for them they did not muster sufficient courage to make the attempt. Port Arthur was reached on June 21st, and the next fifty miles to Lake Shebandowan sorely tried the patience and endurance of the brave commander and his faithful troops. There were hills to climb, muskegs to cross, and rivers to span. A bridge, three hundred and twenty feet long and eighteen feet wide, was constructed over the Kaministiquia, and others of lesser dimensions over the Mattawan and Oskondogee. From daylight to dark the tired soldiers, unaccustomed as many of them were to manual labor, worked like navvies, calling forth from their commanding officer in his report a high tribute to their efficiency. Lake Shebandowan was finally reached, and by August 1st all were under way again for Fort Frances, where a company of the Ontario Rifles was left to guard a reserve supply of stores. The main body moved on towards Fort Garry, where the loyal inhabitants, heedless of the drenching rain and ankle-deep mud, turned out *en masse* to welcome the arrival of the first detachment of their deliverers on August 24th, just one day short of three months from their embarkation at Toronto, a trip that can now be made on schedule time in thirty-six hours. Among the officers of the expedition were two promising young soldiers, Captain Buller and Lieutenant Butler, who afterwards won distinction in the wars of the Empire as General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., and General Sir William Butler, K.C.B.

With the advent of the Brigade the provisional government was mysteriously dissolved and the recreant "President" fled across the river, where he continued to menace the settlement until induced to leave the country. Canada afterwards had good cause to regret that the usurper had not been promptly arrested and placed on trial for the murder of Scott, although the prevailing opinion at the time appears to have been in favor of allowing him to escape across the border, a fugitive from justice. His removal from the scene and the presence of so imposing a force of militia had the effect of quieting the disturbing factions and restoring peace, and upon the arrival of the Hon. Mr. Archibald, the first Lieutenant-Governor to be installed as such, the new province embarked at once upon the serious business of setting its house in order. The first election for the Legislative Assembly, consisting of twenty-four members, was held on December 20th, 1870, and Mr. Smith was returned as member for Winnipeg. A few weeks later, upon the urgent request of an influential deputation, he accepted the nomination for the division of Selkirk at the parliamentary election for the House of Commons, and after a spirited contest was returned as its first representative at Ottawa. There was also a second branch of the Legislature known as the Legislative Council, which survived but a few years, as it was felt to be an unnecessary adjunct.

The first Cabinet was composed of the Hon. H. J. Clark, Attorney-General; Hon. Alfred Boyd, Minister of Public Works and Agriculture; Hon. Max A. Gerard, Provincial Treasurer; Hon. Thomas Howard, Provincial Secretary, and the Hon. James Mackay, President of the

Council. The Legislature met for the first time on March 15th, 1871. The office of Lieutenant-Governor was no sinecure, for, there being no Premier, the members of the Cabinet were responsible to him, and he personally revised all the proposed legislation. The Attorney-General was leader of the house, but as a matter of fact wielded no greater power than any other member of the Cabinet. Theirs was no easy task, to work out the details of governing a new province for which there was no exact precedent and no guide but the slender framework of the Dominion Act. They applied themselves zealously to the work before them and, following in many respects the laws and departmental regulations of the Province of Ontario, they evolved a system which has stood the test of years, and to their credit and that of succeeding Legislatures, has been the subject of but few amendments. One of the measures passed at this first session was "The School Act," which was seized upon by the politicians of the day, and for a quarter of a century was a favorite bone of contention, until happily disposed of by the Federal Government. It seems to have caused but little dissatisfaction in the province itself until dragged into the political arena by those from without.

All that territory formerly controlled or claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company and lying beyond the limits of the new province was governed by an Executive Council, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba was *ex officio* Lieutenant-Governor of this extensive area. The boundaries of Manitoba were subsequently enlarged to their present dimensions and a separate government was given to the North-West Territory. At a more recent

date the infant provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were carved out of this fertile district and admitted to the confederation upon the same footing as the older provinces. By the year 1873 the citizens of the new province dwelling at The Forks began to feel their importance as the largest community in the West and the distributing centre for the entire province. The name Winnipeg is derived from two Indian words, "Win Nipiy," signifying "muddy water," and was first applied to the lake of that name by the Salteaux Indians, who, accustomed to the clear waters of Lake Superior, thus expressed their contempt for those of a darker hue in the prairie lake. Nothing but incorporation as a city would satisfy the foremost prairie town. Accordingly a Bill of Incorporation was prepared and introduced into the Legislature, but through the influence of some of the largest property-holders, who feared an excessive increase in their tax bills, the measure was thrown out upon some trifling technicality. This was followed by an indignation meeting of the citizens held in the open air, at which it was resolved that they should go in a body to the Assembly and demand the reintroduction and passing of the bill. At the appointed time almost the entire population marched to the Parliament Buildings to enforce their demands and were addressed by the Honorable Dr. O'Donnell, a member of the Legislative Council, who expressed his sympathy with their cause, but advised them to repair peaceably to their homes, prepare a new Act differing slightly in form, if not in substance, from the rejected measure, and hand it in to the Clerk of the Council, and he assured them that it would be carefully considered by that body. The

crowd which had assembled in a fitting humor to carry out their threat of tearing down the building about the ears of the legislators, were pleased with the attitude of the representative of the upper chamber and acted upon his advice. The new Act was prepared, passed by the Council, and sent forward to the Assembly, when it became law. The draftsman of the bill, who was also one of its most earnest supporters, was honored by being elected the first mayor of the new city.

The rapid strides that have been made in converting the buffalo pastures into wheat fields during the past forty years, the building of the transeontinental railways, with their network of branch lines, the tide of immigration that has been steadily flowing into this vast domain, and the populous towns and cities that have sprung up in every part of the North-West are not unknown to the reader. This phenomenal growth continues to-day. Every ship that reaches our shores and every train that crosses our western border brings its quota of home-seekers bound for the prairie provinces. Who is bold enough to prophesy what forty years hence will witness?

